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THE

TWO PATHS

BY

LOUISA DALTON

AND OTHER

STORIES AND SKETCHES

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TWO PATHS.

I.

THE noise of a cannon was heard through the fog. The iron throats of the old battery in front of the summer hotel were saluting the passenger steamer, whose answering whistle was hoarse, like the voice of some great animal in pain.—"Boom!"

Pierre Lachange strode forward through the high grass, remarking to himself, in rather bad French, that the boat was uncommonly late. He gave it no other thought; the movements of the steamers mattered little to him, unless when he went to sell his fish. The new hotel on the hillside stretched its arms out among the birch-trees. The light from the windows illuminated the lawn, making it pos-

sible, by the aid of the long northern twilight, for a few of the guests to finish an interesting, though not very level, game of lacrosse. Within the building, servants were flitting to and fro; and in the dining-room, the great event of the day was in progress.

Pierre gave a glance at these sights, realizing for the hundredth time that he lived a life apart from them; but finding, as usual, a charm in their very strangeness; and stopped in the shadow of a gable to chat with another habitant about the price of blueberries. That subject exhausted, there remained still the lumber rafts and the salmon and the new *curé;* and at the end of half an hour the chatter had not ceased.

"And they said," Pierre was murmuring—"what is that?"

A procession was solemnly winding up the hillside. A woman lay upon a rude stretcher; a white-capped nurse carried a little child, and various friendly people followed, wondering and sympathetic. The sick lady would die, they said. No one knew what the illness was. "Something contagious, perhaps," suggested one,

at which the timid among them shrank away. Pierre hurried to meet them, gently pushed one of the feebler bearers to one side and took his place.

The plump landlord came to the door of the hotel, alarm written upon every feature. "Go away!" he screamed, waving his hands. "Go away!"

"But the sick lady must find shelter somewhere."

"She can not come here. There is no knowing what the disease is."

"But," said one, "she can not be comfortable in our small houses, already so full and noisy."

"I tell you to go away!" roared the landlord. "My guests will not have it. There is cholera in the States. There will be a panic."

The nurse began to weep afresh, and the sick woman moaned.

"Take her to my mother's," said Pierre, with decision. "We have few comforts, but we have hearts softer than stone."

The landlord did not hear this remark, having already slammed the door.

Mother Lachange, a dumpy woman, in

a blue homespun gown, stood on her threshold looking for her son. A loaf of bread, dark and moist, was upon the table, and the floor had been scrubbed until it shone like her own white hair. The spinning-wheel was pushed into a corner, and the good woman's thoughts were busy with her many blessings, her fingers meanwhile guiding the dancing needles without which Pierre's winter stockings would never be fashioned.

"Dear Pierre!" she thought. "Where in all the province is there another like him? Who can trap a bear or catch a salmon as he can? Who can sing at the *fêtes* with a voice to match his?"

She heard his voice now, hearty and strong; but he was not singing. And what were all those men bringing, tramping slowly over the daisies and the golden-rod?

"A sick woman from the boat, mother," explained Pierre quickly, in his chopped-off French. "They would not take her at the hotel, and I brought her to you."

Mother Lachange asked no questions. "Put her on my bed," she said. She had

the curiosity of her race, but there would be time for questioning afterward. The men who had borne the burden in, went outside and whispered softly among themselves; but within the little house there were quick commands, and the noiseless bustle which abounds when there is life at stake.

The nurse redoubled her lamentations. "Be quiet!" said Mother Lachange; "and hush the little one." The girl replied with a torrent of words, which no one could understand; but her weeping was subdued, as Pierre's mother brewed odorous herbs, and he hurried away for the *curé*. Not for the doctor—oh, no! There was no doctor in St. Genevieve with half the skill of the woman with the calm eyes and shining hair, who was moving swiftly about the low-raftered room. But no skill availed with the stranger, and when Pierre, breathless almost, came back, bringing help for the soul so soon to try the mysteries of the unknown land, death was very near. She stretched out her arms in a feeble way, and they laid the child within them. Then a sweet calm settled upon her face.

"Mary!" she said; smiled, and died before the smile faded. Whether she with her last word gave her infant a name, or whether she called upon the Mother of her Lord, no one knew. The voice of the priest was heard uttering the petitions for the death of the faithful, the woman being unmistakably a Catholic; but there was no other sound. When the rites were over, he turned, thinking to make one more endeavor to understand the servant, but her seat was empty. She had watched her chance to leave the room unobserved, had run to the departing steamer, guided by its lights, and no one in St. Genevieve ever saw the sturdy Scandinavian again.

They buried the stranger in the churchyard upon the hill; and the tears of Mother Lachange flowed fast as she stood beside the open grave, with little Marie laughing and crowing in her arms. Of course, the good friends among whom the baby had been thrown, as a bit of seaweed is washed upon the shore, set to work at once to find traces of her people. With the help of the *curé* they advertised far and wide; they questioned the passen-

gers of each incoming boat; the *curé* himself wrote innumerable letters to distant friends, and followed every clue, however slight, to the end. But nothing availed. Weeks fled, and autumn came, bringing cold blasts from the north, scattering the summer visitors, and stripping the verdure from the earth, and the vines from the cottages; but no one sent for little Marie. Autumn gave way to winter; the snow was piled as high as the houses, and covered the hills like a garment; but little Marie seemed to be forgotten by the world. And never did storm-tossed bird fold its tired wings in a sweeter place of rest.

"I hope her people will come soon or not at all," said Mother Lachange, as the spring came around again. "If she stays with us a little longer, it will break my heart to give her up."

The stolid Breton peasant woman was not often sentimental like this. It seemed as if the coming of the child had unlocked fresh reservoirs of love and poetry within her breast.

"It's my opinion," answered Pierre, "that they will never come for her. It

is all strange. It would have been easy to trace them here. I think the good God means that you are to keep the child."

The mother's eyes, long unused to weeping, filled with happy tears. A blossom had fallen, apparently from heaven, into the Indian Summer of her somewhat dreary life; and she accepted it with simple gratitude, never counting the cost or care. God and His saints had sent little Marie; that was enough. The trunk of clothing left on shore with the sick woman that eventful night was stored away in the attic, with the snow-shoes, the odorous herbs and simple belongings, for which there was no room below. It contained nothing from which the parentage of the child could be discovered. If documents or letters existed which would have given any clue, they were probably in the hand-bag which the nurse carried off in her mad flight. The letters M. F. A. were upon the trunk, and the same initials wrought into the linen within it; but that was all. Upon the child's tiny garments there was no mark whatever.

So the trunk and its contents were

shouldered by Pierre and carried aloft; and Mother Lachange in some way found time to fashion clothing better suited to the daughter of a fisherman than that brave with lace and embroidery, which lay, with scented leaves between its folds, in the little attic room.

The child was adopted through due compliance with the law, and became, as fast as it could make her, Marie Lachange. As one year after another passed and nothing happened, Mother Lachange gradually lost her fear lest this little storm-tossed bird which had been driven into her nest should be torn from its safe shelter.

Meanwhile the tiny maid roamed about the hills at will; gathering a knowledge of their flora and fauna, learning the laws which governed the tides, how to snare the salmon and manage a canoe. In the summer season she sold wild flowers to the tourists, who flocked on shore for a few minutes or an hour, as the tide permitted, and who bought the worthless blossoms of the child just because of her sweet, shy ways. And within the dormer-windowed house Mother Lachange taught

her how to spin, and how to fashion Pierre's big stockings from the yarn, and guided the tiny fingers through all the mysteries of baking and brewing. Then when night fell, and the cow was milked and fed, and the bread set to rise for the morrow, Marie would fly across the field to the old stone house where Father Picard, the young *curé*, dwelt with his mother. Ah! there was another world. The cow was forgotten, and the wild northern landscape changed to the Champs-Elysées, as the child listened to the words of the French lady; her eyes shining, and her little heart throbbing fast.

Madame Picard was homesick in the wilderness, Marie was the best of listeners. What wonder that the gentle lady loved to prattle by the hour of another land, where the sun always shone; where acres of roses sent their perfume abroad upon the happy wind; where the air was soft, and the grapes swelled and ripened on the vines; and where the gay people were light of heart as butterflies poised on a rose? She had in her veins the blood of the old *noblesse*, always brave and long-

suffering; but this life in the New World, so novel at first, in time grew dull and painful. Her son, for whose sake she had crossed the ocean and lighted her household fires in the land its founders called New France, was busy with the cares of his large parish; and she found no other adult companion among all the inhabitants of St. Genevieve.

Marie, though, was unlike the rest: catching the lights and shades of the stories of past ages as they were clothed in the French woman's winning speech; and learning the ways of the outside world, which was to her, except for Madame Picard's glowing descriptions, an unknown land, as far away as the stars. She learned much of real use as well from her kind friend, whom it made happier to guide that fresh young mind. She learned to speak pure French, to embroider with fairy stitches, to sing with taste and precision; and gained more than a smattering of the solid learning which Madame Picard had brought from her convent school.

And so the years rolled by, and Marie was seventeen—a shy, slim girl, with

olive skin, dark, wistful eyes, and a mass of waving hair the color of gold. There was no one at home to tell her she was beautiful, but the eyes of the summer visitors (St. Genevieve had become a thronged resort) were fixed upon her, to the evident chagrin and alarm of Pierre and his mother. Pierre was married now, and little children made the old house bright.

II.

It was early in August, and the day's work was done. Marie strolled rather listlessly over toward the parsonage, knitting as she walked. She knew her own history now, or what little there was to learn; and the feeling that she must go out into the world to see its wonders, and find her own people, had strengthened with her strength. She felt, or rather thought she felt, that the wave of destiny which had tossed her upon this shore had thrown her among aliens. She had long ago found by listening to

Madame Picard's pure speech, that the *patois* of the peasants was unpleasant. Pierre's children were disagreeable, and the house always smelled of fish; sometimes even of garlic. She had looked over the contents of the trunk, which was her only heritage, and knew that the garments were those of gentle people; and she wove romances without stint, of which she was the central figure: in fancy meeting her relatives, who would make her the idol of their hearts, and give her the luxuries her station demanded. Be patient with her. She was young, imaginative, with other blood than that which coursed so slowly through the veins of Breton peasants; and the grand air and wide culture of the dear old French lady had unwittingly tended to confirm her in her discontent.

Throngs of people from the hotel were trooping over the fields in search of certain scarlet berries, with which to decorate the parlors for some sort of a *fête* they had in view. One lady caught sight of Marie.

"Ah, you dear little thing!" she cried. "I was looking for you. I have a very

special errand this time, and I did not dare venture into the jaws of your mother —grandmother—what *do* you call her?"

"She does not bite," said Marie, ignoring the question. "And she would be polite to anybody."

"But then, you must know, my dear child, that she does look upon us as very frivolous people, and thinks we may make a worldling of you, if you see too much of us."

Marie was silent. "Worldling" was a new word, and she did not fancy the sound of it.

"And indeed this time she would have cause," went on the vivacious woman; "for I have the most charming plan for you, and I am sure she would never approve of anything so agreeable. In two weeks I leave St. Genevieve; the nights are getting so cold, they give me the neuralgia; and I mean to take you with me."

Marie knitted very fast, and a little frown settled between her eyes. "But if I do not choose to be taken?"

"Oh, I can't entertain such a thought for a moment!" Mrs. Thompson replied,

following up her advantage. "You simply *must* go, and they owe it to you to let you."

"In what—" began Marie, haughtily, hesitating for a word.

"Capacity?" suggested Mrs. Thompson.

"Yes. In what capacity would you take me with you, as you say it?"

"Why, in no capacity at all. That is the best of it. Just come and talk French with the children. I will give you a good salary—you needn't look so surprised at the word: salaries are very convenient things;—and at the end of a year, if you don't wish to stay longer, you can come back with money enough to make you an aristocrat forever in this wretched place."

Marie meditated. The aristocrats of whom Madame Picard had spoken had little to do with money; indeed, she remembered one duchess who sold her hair to the jailer when she went to the guillotine, that her child might not starve. There was a strange confusion of terms, but doubtless all would be made clear in time.

"You need not hurry about deciding," said Mrs. Thompson. "And you will have to talk the grandmother over, for she can't understand me. I do hope you will go. You would not be a servant, you see; only my little friend. Even the money shall be a secret between us. Come out to-morrow, after you have slept over the matter. Good-night!" And she gathered up her voluminous skirts and went to rejoin her companions, feeling that the leaven had been left to work—that she stood a good chance of securing a French nursery governess for her children at a very reasonable price.

And Marie? All at once the scene grew dearer: the familiar landscape illumined; each tree was a beloved friend; the faces of Pierre and his mother beautiful and tender. No, she would never leave them; and she counted the stitches in the heel of the stocking, and resolved to forget the odious stranger's enticing words.

She said nothing of the matter to the *curé's* mother who that evening told her for the hundredth time of the dreadful days when the guillotine was king, and

of the pious lords and ladies who shed the best blood of France at its horrible behest. Marie tried to be as attentive as usual, but the poison of the world's praise was working in her mind. Why would Pierre eat garlic, and his mother wear such big shoes? And she could earn money just by talking to those children; and her hands would grow white in time, like Mrs. Thompson's.

A change in the voice of Madame Picard awoke her from her dream.

"You are so silent to-night, dear one! Is everything quite well with you?" asked the lady, in tender tones.

"Oh, yes;"—then, contradicting herself,—"but I have things to trouble me like other people."

"Are they not all very kind to you at the good Pierre's?"

"Oh, most kind, Madame! It is not that. But have you never thought what it was to hear of the wonderful, great world, and to know you should never see it—never see anything but this black river and the birch-trees? I hate them sometimes! I want to see cities, and the people who live in them; I want to see

everything beautiful and great. I was not born here, you know. I have not the content of these people. Oh, I am so wicked, and so unhappy!"

"May the good God forgive me if I have helped to make you so!" said the lady, reverently. I have thought only to please you, dear, and divert myself as well. I have only told you the pleasant side of what you call the wonderful great world. It is full of dreadful sin that you can not imagine. There is no happiness but peace; and that is here, where people are not so filled with the wisdom of the world that they are ashamed to serve God."

"You are right,—I am sure you are right. I will not think the wrong thoughts again."

And so they talked of other things; of the Lachange baby's teething and the *curé's* new soutane; and Marie, before going home, stole into the church, and found comfort and strength before the altar of the Blessed Virgin.

III.

THERE was a shadow over the old stone house. Pierre was silent, and his wife glanced at him furtively as she hushed her children.

"It is about money," whispered Mother Lachange. "A bank in Quebec has closed, and his savings were in it."

Marie thought of Mrs. Thompson's words.

"And you know what the fishing has been this year," Pierre's mother went on. "I am sure we shall get through the winter in some way, just as we have other winters; but it is no wonder that he forgets to sing to-night."

The leaven of unrest had a new impetus, and Marie's late and well-meant resolution vanished from her memory. When the last black-eyed baby was still, and the mother asleep from very weariness, the girl told, simply and unreservedly, of Mrs. Thompson's offer. Before she had finished the stout arms of Mother Lachange were about her.

"Oh, my child, you shall never leave us!

We do not care for the golden dollars you would gather. Pierre, tell her that she must not go."

But Pierre had nothing to say.

"Speak, my son; you are her father in the law."

Then Pierre spoke. "I do not see how we are to get through the winter, and perhaps it is best for her to go," he said, slowly.

A nervous torrent of words from his mother interrupted him; but Marie raised her little hand, dark and rough from berry-picking. "He is right," she said. "I will go, and I will come back again."

"They all say they will come back, and they never do!" cried Mother Lachange.

"Have I ever told you a lie?"

"Never, dear one."

"Well, listen now. If the good God keeps me alive I will come back." And so wisely did she plead, and so deftly lead the talk to other things, that before bed-time came, the smiles were in their accustomed places upon the face of the elder woman, and the trunk in the garret had been tenderly ransacked to see if it contained such clothes as befitted a young

woman about to try her fortune in the world.

A slim little figure was standing in the pale sunshine when Mrs. Thompson left the hotel the next morning.

"I will go," announced Marie, coming to the point at once, as was her wont. "I can talk the French of Madame Picard, and I will teach your children. But I do not wish to be your friend, as you said: I wish to earn money. You can arrange that with Pierre."

"Why, my dear," protested Mrs. Thompson—mentally ejaculating, "Mercenary creature!"—"do not be so unkind. If you do not wish to feel friendly, I am sure you will not suit me at all."

"That is not what I meant. I mean that I do not wish you to think what is not so. It is not that I care for you or the children that I will go: it is for the money, and I will do what is right."

"Cool!" was Mrs. Thompson's inward comment; but this lofty candor only added to the value of her treasure. She knew that she could trust the child.

Marie, the matter settled, rushed to Madame Picard. There was no defensive

armor now,—no stiff, dignified little ways. The gentle woman put her arms around the girl and blessed her.

"You do right to go, my child; and you will let me give you some good counsel about the great world. It is, perhaps, best that you see it with your own young eyes." Then she poured forth instructions which she thought fitted the case. Slightly prim and austere they were, those social rules of another country and period; but they suited well one reared in the Province, which is, says one, not the France of to-day, but the France of Louis Quatorze. The kind warnings of her friend sank into Marie's heart like a strong foot into the mellow soil of spring. "You have the proper manner, dear," added the *curé's* mother, "except that you are somewhat—what shall I call it?—too plain of speech often. It would be better if you could learn to coat a bitter pill with sugar. But then," with a sigh, "it is the blood of the Puritan, I suppose; and it will always be easiest for you to go about saying what you think, and nothing else."

"And what should I say, Madame? The truth, surely?"

"There are two ways of speaking the truth, and one should learn what not to say. That is tact—the very finest. I have a plain friend. I tell her she is ugly; that is truth, and it pains her heart. But I say only that when she speaks the soul shines in her face, like a lamp behind a window; that is truth, too, and she is happy. It has cost me little, and is it not the kinder!"

So the lady went on with her Old World wisdom; and Marie listened, and tried to heed, and remember, as the time of her going away drew near. She would have no modern clothes,—no cheap imitation of the gowns of the summer boarders.

"I have no wish to look like a lady," she told Pierre's mother. "People do not hire ladies to look after their children. I will dress just as I do here when I go after the cow."

So one more gown was made, of the dark blue stuff which their own hands had spun and woven; and plenty of trim aprons were fashioned, each with its own white Normandy cap. All her hair, the color of burnished gold, was drawn to the

top of her head as she tried on those pretty caps; but little tendrils would escape, as if protesting against the garb of servitude.

Mother Lachange did not fully approve of this freak of Marie's. She would have had the child equip herself with the stock of fine garments lying among the lavender in the garret.

"If you should meet your own people," she remonstrated, "you will shame them by looking like a servant."

"You are my own people!" cried Marie, her long, dark lashes wet. "And I am to be a servant, whatever Mrs. Thompson may pretend; and if I am not, it is no thanks to them. I no longer wish to meet them; that is all over. I will wear the dark blue gowns that you have made. Then I will never forget that I have promised to come back. And I surely *will* come back!" she ended, flinging her arms about her adopted mother.

Mrs. Thompson secretly rejoiced in the curious pride which made Marie's fine taste prevail. She had worried lest the girl should try to copy the clothes that she would see, and had thought how

quickly the picturesque would vanish before fashionable headgear.

Finally, all was ready. The *curé* had written to a friend in New York to keep an eye on Marie; his mother had hung a blessed medal about her neck, as she kissed each cheek in her French fashion; Pierre had turned away with an unmanly lump in his throat, and all the babies had been embraced over and over. Mother Lachange was not to be found, but Marie knew where she was. Prostrate before the altar of the Blessed Virgin the elder woman lay. And the fog lifted, and the steamer screeched, and some one drew the gangplank away. The journey to the world was begun.

It is hard for us to fancy what that journey was to the young Marie—the little bit of flotsam tossed by a wave upon that Northern shore so long before. Nothing that could be dignified as a memory had kept a place in her mind; but so strong is heredity, so wonderful the ties which link us with our own flesh and blood, that once in a while, as she had been driving home the cow, or strolling across the hills to the place where

the blueberries hid, or watching the great constellations burning in the heavens, like a strain of forgotten music, the ghost of what seemed a remembrance would cause her to look around in alarm, until the sight of Mother Lachange shoving her bread into the out-door oven, or Pierre coming up from the river with a load of fish, would bring her fancy back again to earth.

"I seem to be two persons," she would tell the *curé's* mother. "The French Marie is a happy girl, who never cares what is beyond the mountains; but there is another."

"I like best the French Marie," the sweet old lady would answer. "She is the fortunate one; she is the good child, who does not question why *le bon Dieu* left her here with the fisher-people. The fine folk would not have her sick mother; they would have let the little child starve. It was the poor fisherman who was her friend. Yes, I like best the French Marie."

The journey down the strange river until it poured its black waters into the St. Lawrence, was not so very novel to

Marie. There is a strange monotony to those high walls, which reach up so far towards the sky, as if granite mountains had been split in twain in some giant's rough play. She knew the dark river well, and had visited every inlet and cove for miles in her own small canoe of birch bark. As to the steamer—why, it had come three times a week to St. Genevieve every summer since she could remember, with its load of Englishmen, bent on hunting or fishing; its butterfly women, who sought health or a new sensation among those Northern hills; or tourists, who just gazed, and went away. It was when morning came, and the broad St. Lawrence was spread out before the eyes of the simple girl, that she began to realize what a small part of the broad earth was shut in by the Laurentian chain, and that every stroke of the wheel took her farther away from those who had loved her and succored her when all but God seemed to forget.

There was so much to see in Quebec that she saw but little. Her chief thought was that in some cruel way the quaint city had swallowed Pierre's say-

ings. When they took the railway train, and her first amazement was over, her old self-reliance all came back. The passengers gazed at her; some, perhaps, wondering at that high-bred face, framed in the cap of a nurse; others, looking just for the pure delight that sweet countenances always give to artistic eyes. But she no more heeded the glances than she would the leaves which shook in the March wind, or the squirrels which ran across her path as she brought the cow safely home. Madame Picard had builded better than she knew, both by example and precept; and it was her friend and pupil who looked and acted the lady; it was plump Mrs. Thompson's flushed face upon which the vulgarity of newly acquired wealth had written its tell-tale lines.

Marie had no especial duties to perform on the journey, except to answer the children when they crawled into her lap with their eager questions; for a stout German had their physical well-being in charge. They, however, with the fickleness common to their years, had repudiated the sturdy Gretchen, who

tearfully threatened to give warning as soon as their journey was at an end. The little ones were as unlike as possible: Stanley, aggressive and impertinent; Bella, timid and clinging. Our young traveller saw that, as regarded the boy, at least, she was likely to earn all the shining dollars that were to help Pierre through the winter.

Their train moved into the great station at New York very early in the morning;—so early that the dignified man in top-boots who met them, had a most forbidding expression upon his face, at having his comfortable sleep interfered with. Marie thought him some distinguished family friend, until, to her surprise, he grasped the *impedimenta* of travel, and Stanley began to call him "Old Thomas," and kick his plump calves, unrebuked by the fond mother.

IV.

Now began a life which was, in some ways, a great change for the simply

reared girl; in others, just a continuation of the beautiful years during which she had run about the Northern hills, or guided her canoe on the wild Northern river. Nothing could harm her, for she carried a talisman in the holy religion which was the greater part of her existence. And then, had she not promised to go back? "*Je reviendrai!*" she wrote on a little slip of paper, which she shut into the prayer-book. She heard the words above the roar of the city's streets, and they always closed the letters to those whom she fondly termed her own people.

"It is strange," she would write, "and it is wonderful, this city, which never sleeps;—but I will go back." Or, "They are very good to me, though perhaps they do not understand me; and I believe the children love me. One could look out here forever and see something new. The world is larger than I thought;—but I will go back."

Always that. Above the clatter of the orchestra, when duty called upon her to take charge of the children at some gay entertainment; above the murmur of

the city, which, as she said, never sleeps, she would hear those words. Sometimes, at night, when she could not rest, she would look from the window of the fine nursery, out over the square, where the electric stars twinkled, carriages with fair freight would roll along, pedestrians would step as quickly and alertly as if it were noon, and the noise of the policeman's club would ring against the walls like the beating of a great heart.

"I like better the still nights at home," she would think. "O Pierre! O Mother Lachange! I will go back! I will go back!"

Letters came to her with regularity. Pierre, they said, would save a little out of the wreck of the bank; the snow had come, and the boats had long stopped running; Fanchon was down with the measles, and the black kitten had run away. Not a word of their loneliness, —not a word of missing the elder daughter of the house; but she read between the ill-spelled lines, and knew her friends were so silent just for her own sake.

Madame Picard had no such scruples. When her letters would come, sealed

with a crest, and directed in a foreign hand, Marie knew well what they would contain: and she would not read them until the children were asleep, and she could weep unnoticed. For they would say: "Dear little one:—our hearts break with longing for you! You are kind, you are noble, to go away and look after those unpleasant children, that you may help the good Pierre. But this wilderness is insupportable without you. Mother Lachange forgets to smile and Pierre, to sing. For myself,—ah, little one, the days are long! Why did we let you go?"

"Why does she write such things?" Marie would sob. "It is hard enough without them." And then, perchance, Mrs. Thompson would call her for a look at her toilet as she set out for the opera, and the poor child would dry her eyes.

One night her employer noticed the big, square envelope, which would not fit well into the tiny pocket of Marie's apron, and with her usual lack of courtesy, snatched it, and said; "It is absurd for you to have such aristocratic-looking

letters come to you. Who is there in St. Genevieve who sports a crest? Surely not those coarse fisher-people?" She got no answer—a fact she attributed to "pertness," her synonym for "insubordination," But, then, Marie was invaluable, and it was not safe to rebuke her; so she waddled—there is no other word—off to her carriage, serene in her new Worth gown, which she was sure imparted to her the genuine "grand air."

Mrs. Clarence Thompson was, or tried to be, a woman of fashion. Her carriage was well ordered, her servants the best money could procure, her house in an unexceptionable quarter, and she hung on to the skirts of the older families by reason of the freedom with which she spent her large income. She made it seem even larger by good management; saving in small things, in order that she might be prodigal in great ones. Thus, according to her methods, she paid Marie the lowest possible amount, until the young girl, in her way, rebelled.

"I take the place of two," she said, after the German maid had left in high dudgeon. "I am the children's teacher,

as well as nurse. For myself I would not care,—you know, madame, that I would not; but I am working to help my people."

"But you have such advantages here?" suggested Mrs. Thompson.

"Pardon, Madame! It was not for what you call advantages that I left my home."

So the employer succumbed, knowing that such service as Marie rendered would be hard to secure at any price; and the poor child had the pleasure of sending snug little sums back to the Canadian hamlet, where winter had already locked the swift rivers and stripped the green from the landscape; learning, meanwhile, the sweet lesson that labor for those we love brings its own blessing with it.

V.

The Indian Summer came, filling the air with a golden haze. Even in the great city its influence was felt. The yellow leaves floated softly down from

the trees in the square, and the sun shone through a veil. One day Marie, as was her custom, took her charges to their favorite seat in one of the breathing spots with which New York is blessed,—a tiny park near by their home.

"Tell us a story, please;" said Stanley.

So she told, not a tale of canoe paddling, or bear trapping, this time, but the sad one of the Acadian peasants.

"It was Indian Summer then," she said, "just as it is now; but they called it the Summer of All Saints, because it usually came near that feast—"

Suddenly Stanley's attention, which the poorest story could always enchain, was diverted.

"If there isn't Mr. Atkinson!" he cried, jumping from his seat and going to meet a tall, white-haired man, who lifted him from the ground and kissed him. Then Bella followed her brother, and was treated in the same way. The stranger was evidently a close family friend.

"This is our nurse," explained Stanley, who was as yet oblivious of the distinctions of caste.

Mr. Atkinson lifted his hat and bowed

as if she had been a duchess. He was a gentleman of the old school, now so sadly going out of fashion.

"He's been away about a million miles," said Stanley, in an aside; then aloud: "Mr. Atkinson, when did you come back?"

"Only last night," he answered. "Are your mother and father well?"

"Yes, sir; they're well. Mamma is always at parties, and papa at the bank. Did you bring me the magic-lantern?"

"I'll drop in at dinner-time and tell you," replied Mr. Atkinson, smiling. "I must go now." He waved his hand to the children, gave a furtive look at Marie, and hurried on.

"He's awfully nice," said Stanley; "and terribly rich. He brings us *bonbons*. He lives over there, three doors from us —but please go on with the story. You'd got to the place where the English burned Grandpa."

"Grand Pré," corrected Marie, laughing, going on to tell the rest, and forgetting the chance encounter with the kind stranger;—the finest gentleman, she thought, that she had ever seen. She

was reminded of it later by Mrs. Thompson.

"You may bring the children in to dessert, Marie," she ordered.

They surely needed no bringing, being perfectly well able to take themselves; but it was necessary that good form be observed. It was considered proper in Mrs. Thompson's circle to have the sleepy children brought in by a white-capped *bonne* at the end of the dinner.

Mr. Atkinson seemed to find something interesting in the face of the slim girl who pared the oranges for the children; but she did not know it. She was wondering what little Fanchon would think of the great golden balls, and fancying how the sight of them would make the baby crow and laugh with joy.

"When I go home," she resolved, "I will carry at least a dozen." Then Mrs. Thompson's high-pitched voice broke in upon her reverie.

"Mr. Atkinson will take the children to drive to-morrow, Marie. Be sure that Bella wears her warm coat."

The leaves were falling in Central Park as they rolled along in its pleasant

shade the next day; Marie and Bella facing Mr. Atkinson and Stanley.

"You just get her to tell you a story," commanded Stanley. "She knows a hundred. She lives where we went last summer; up the Saguenay. She knows all about shooting, and how to catch trout and boats—and everything."

"Are you French, my child?" asked the owner of the carriage, kindly.

Marie was confused at her unsolicited prominence in the conversation. "I—I do not know," she answered, faintly.

Now this was a most extraordinary answer to a very natural and civil question, and Mr. Atkinson plainly betrayed his surprise.

"I do not know who my real people are," she went on. "I was adopted by French people when my mother died. She was a stranger."

Stanley stared. This was more enchanting to him than any story of bears or Acadians.

"Tell us more about it," the boy demanded, in his imperious way.

"When we get back," she said swiftly, in French.

"No, now!" he insisted. "Make her tell the rest, Mr. Atkinson. And Marie, you needn't talk French before him. It isn't polite; for he hates everything and everybody French. I've heard mamma say so."

"I am not so fierce as he would make me out; and to-morrow, when you bring the children to see my new pictures, perhaps, Miss—I do not know your name."

"My name is Marie Lachange."

"Well, Miss Lachange, perhaps Stanley can coax you to tell the pretty story then."

"He calls her 'Miss Lachange'!" laughed the little fellow, in great glee. "How ridiculous it is to call Marie that!"

So great was the difference in their ages that Mr. Atkinson's interest in the young girl was not remarked upon; indeed, Mrs. Thompson was only too glad to tell him what she knew about her—which was not very much—as they sat by the library fire that evening, and Mr. Thompson dozed near by in his comfortable chair.

"I am not sentimental, you will admit, Ellen," said the guest; "but I can't get her out of my mind. It was up in that

Northern country that poor Mary died. There is but a chance—"

Mrs. Thompson was getting excited. "Mr. Atkinson, you do not mean—you cannot mean—"

Mr. Thompson awoke, then fell asleep again.

"I do mean that my poor girl left a baby up there among those peasants; and they were, God knows, better to her than her own flesh and blood. They made inquiries, too, in their innocent way; and these inquiries, I remember, came from St. Genevieve. It is not a common name; and then the resemblance—the eyes and hair, even the voice. Ellen, something tells me that this nurse of yours is my grandchild."

Mr. Thompson was wide awake now, and his wife was fairly gasping.

"Will you call her down stairs?" asked the old gentleman. "Then we will know all about it." He tried to be calm, to control his excitement and agitation, and to reason like the philosopher he had always been.

Marie came. She had taken off her cap for the night, and forgotten to re-

place it at the unusual summons. Her hair tumbled upon her shoulders, as it had done when she had gone singing down to the meadow for the cow; and she had thrown a white shawl about her that had long lain in the lavender-scented trunk in the Canadian garret.

Mr. Atkinson gave one look. "My God," he cried, "it is my child again!"

What scene was this? What maunderings of an infirm old man had they brought her down-stairs to witness?

"Marie," said Mrs. Thompson, with decision, wishing to bring matters to a climax, for the situation was growing strained; "this gentleman wishes to know a little of your history. Would you mind telling him?"

"There is nothing I would not wish to tell," she answered, respectfully. And she related in simple words, dropping her voice as she spoke of the dead, the tale of her infancy; of her mother's sad death among strange people, of her own adoption, of her subsequent life, and of her reluctant going out into the world that she might help Pierre, who had done so much for her. "They never could find

my own family," she concluded "I think they did not wish to be found."

"Was there no mark upon your mother's linen?" asked the old gentleman, tremblingly.

"Just the letters M. F. A. We had them put on the little cross in the graveyard."

"Her name was Mary Frances," he said, fairly shaking now. "My dear, it may not be pleasant news for you, but I think I am your grandfather."

VI.

MARIE had often imagined what she would say if, in the unknown world beyond the St. Lawrence River, she should meet any one who, by a tie of blood, belonged to her. Now it had happened; and her high-flown sentences were forgotten. She simply put out her slim hand, no longer brown from berry-picking. Mr. Atkinson would have ventured a more paternal greeting, but she drew back. She would have no caresses from

a person who had left her to the charity of others; even if he were her grandfather, of which she was not at all sure.

"There can be no doubt," said the old man; all his dignity relinquished as he pleaded for recognition. "I am the one to whom you naturally belong; for your father died just a week after your mother. But I will not ask you to care for me; only forgive me and bear with me."

"Pardon me, Monsieur," answered Marie; "I do not belong to you, but to Pierre. I am legally of another nation. Other countries have laws as well as this, and I have got on very well so far without grandfathers."

It was a bitter speech, but all the concentrated indignation of years seemed to boil within her. Mr. Atkinson shuddered as though struck a blow. Then he arose.

"I will go now," he said. "To-morrow you may see things differently; and then you can find out the truth, if you care to. But I will not thrust a relationship upon you."

Marie noticed how feeble he had

seemed to grow within a few minutes, and she felt a sort of tenderness toward him, as if she had found in her path a bird with a broken wing.

"I was rude," she said, the color coming and going in her soft, dark cheeks. "It is my fault to be too out-spoken. But, you will admit, it must be startling to have some one you know only a very little say, 'I am your grandfather.'"

At this they all smiled, and a faint light shone in Mr. Atkinson's fine old face; but he did not extend his hand as he said good-night.

"What a foolish girl you are, to be sure!" announced Mrs. Thompson, when the visitor had gone. "There can be no doubt about the matter; and why I never suspected it before I don't know. I can remember Mary Atkinson quite well, though I was but a little girl when she ran off and married that Frenchman."

"Frenchman?" asked Marie, in surprise.

"Yes, he was a Frenchman and a Romanist; and her father never could abide either."

"What is a Romanist?"

"Why, you are one yourself, you little goose! Catholic, then, if that suits you better."

"And my mother?"

"She became one too, and her father shut his door in her face. She wrote to him after that, but he would not answer or hear her name spoken. Then his wife died, and the other children. This house has been like his own home; it was my father's, you know. They were great friends; but not even father dared to speak of poor Mary. He tried it once, and your grandfather interrupted him, saying, 'She is dead. She died in Canada:' and he changed the subject."

"Then he must have known. The advertisements went everywhere."

"I can't say as to that. But, my dear, you must retire now."

There was already perceptible in Mrs. Thompson's manner toward the young stranger within her gates a very great change! Miss Aubrey, the granddaughter of a man reputed to be a millionaire, was a different personage from little Marie of the Saguenay, her children's nurse.

Poor Marie could hardly wait to get to her room, the tiny chamber which opened out of the nursery. The children were sleeping in their white beds, breathing regularly and softly. She stopped and kissed them. "God bless them!" she said, under her breath. She felt that the time was coming when they would cease to be to her what they had been so long. She was very fond of them; and Stanley, from love of her, had grown to be much more gentle and obedient.

With the same unquestioning faith that had made her strong through all her young life, Marie knelt and poured her perplexities and troubles before the Blessed Mother of Good Counsel. Then, not thinking to sleep, after all the strange excitement of the evening, she sat down by the window, her rosary in her hand. The noise of the street, grown familiar now, soothed her; the wind had changed, and the soft air of the Indian Summer night stole in and bathed her cheeks, upon which the tears had dried. She laid her face against the back of the comfortable chair and slept until the rays of the sun awakened her. When her

duties with the children were over for the morning she asked permission to go out for a little while.

"Do whatever you like," said her employer; then, her curiosity getting the better of her, "Where are you going?"

Marie hesitated, but finally answered, politely: "I wish to speak to a friend of our *curé's*. I was to go to him for advice if I needed it. You see, this may not be so—this that the gentleman says, that he is my grandfather. It is hard for me to see the right way."

What was superstition in little Marie was devotion in Miss Aubrey; yet Mrs. Thompson felt called upon to administer a slight rebuke.

"There are others to give you advice—Mr. Thompson or I."

She was talking to the walls. Marie was flying out of the front door and down the street. If the *curé's* friend was not in she would wait to hear from St. Genevieve. He was *not* in, and she let that fact decide. And until she heard from her good friends, she thought, she had only to go on teaching the little

ones, and saying her prayers. Then she went back to the house, and wrote to Madame Picard, bidding her let Pierre and his mother know of the strange events. "And tell them," the short letter said at its close, "that a hundred grandfathers could not make me love them less, and that I will go back."

The letter was long in reaching St. Genevieve; for there were now no boats gliding swiftly up the Saguenay with the tide, and the towns near the head of navigation were as isolated from the bustle of the world as snow and ice could make them. But when at last the missive reached Madame Picard, and was read by her to the listening family in the stone house across the field, it brought much consternation. Not that they believed that the new ties would bind her, and make her forget the old ones; not that they feared she would fail to keep her sweet promise, so freely given; but she was far away, and grandfathers had, perhaps, in that other country, so near and yet so far, rights of which they knew nothing.

There were many and varying opin-

ions among the villagers when the news spread.

"'Tis plain to see," observed one, upon whom the plain-speaking Marie had never looked with favor, "that she has found relations more to her mind."

"Oh," said another, shrugging her shoulders, "do you not know that she said she would come back again, relations or no relations? And do you think the child dislikes the truth as much as you do, Annette Campau?"

So the contention went on, and Mother Lachange believed and hoped and prayed.

"They know you will do what is right, little one," wrote Madame Picard. "And be not too severe with the good grandfather. We must forgive, you know, if we hope to be forgiven. And my son thinks that he can not compel you to do anything against your will; that your true guardians in the law are those whom God gave you when the grandfather did not care. And Pierre, too, says you must try and be kind to Monsieur Atkinson. But when the roses bloom (oh, there are so few roses

in this cold land!) we all know you will come back."

Meanwhile the acquaintance between Mr. Atkinson and his neighbor's hireling (for Marie would not consent to sunder the old relations) was not progressing very rapidly. He did not intrude his presence upon her; he never claimed her attention as a right; and this course slowly had its effect. Gradually she came to look for the grave old man, and to miss him when he did not come. There could be no doubt as to their relationship: that had at once been settled beyond question; but she remained as she had been, the children's nurse and teacher.

There were many things in common between the young girl and her grandfather. He needed help in some scientific studies, which she, reading the old French books to which he referred, could give. They both loved music, too; and had many afternoons, shared by the children, when they listened to some of the best music that the great city afforded. The caps and aprons were now laid aside in public, and strangers

often wondered what the gray-haired man and the girl were to each other, and what the children were to both.

It was Christmas morning, and Marie had crept out of the silent house at five o'clock to go to the first Mass of the glorious feast. Never since coming to New York had she relaxed one of the devotional habits of her childhood. The wayside crosses and the village festivals, when each one's patron saint was in turn honored, had been left behind; but in their place she had seen the fervor of many thousands, who sweetened the bitterness of hard lives by visits to the holy places where sanctuary lamps twinkled day and night. "God," she said, "is here as well as at home; and He will help me to know the right way. Best of all she loved to go to a church, not large, but beautiful as a jewel, where a statue of Our Lady reminded her of the one which, hundreds of feet above the black waters of the Saguenay, stands in storm and sunshine, as if blessing those who trust themselves to the mercy of the waves. In this church she knelt that Christmas morning, offering her

Communion for her simple peasant people, locked fast in their winter home.

When she returned to the house, Mrs. Thompson was waiting. "Your grandfather has sent for you," she said. "He is ill."

Marie's first impulse was to say, "My mother was ill, and did he care?" But the words died on her tongue, and her second thoughts were worthy her better nature. Was he not, in spite of his wealth, a lonely old man? And what had he on earth but her, this granddaughter, who must forgive him, as she would be forgiven? She went to him at once.

"Grandfather," she said, "here I am." She had never called him that before, and his faded eyes brightened.

"I should not have sent for you so early, my child," he said.

"Oh, it is not early for Christmas morning! I have already been to Mass. And I wish you a happy Christmas!"

The light in his eyes faded again. Was the old story to be repeated? Was what he thought a delusion, and named the "popish superstition," again to come

between him and what he loved best on earth?

VII.

MARIE went to work at once, doing all those little offices from love and duty which no servant can do for money; opening the shutters that the brief winter sunshine might stream in; bringing flowers from the conservatory, and placing them where their fragrance and beauty could reach the invalid; smoothing the thin hair away from the fine old face; and all the time keeping up the pleasant chatter, with its quaint accent, of which he had become so fond. He was not very ill, although after a wakeful night he had fancied himself at death's door; and revived speedily under the pleasant treatment of his nurse, finding himself shortly ensconced before the grate in his cheery library.

"I have not had such a Christmas in many years," he said, gaily.

"I think Christmas is always delight-

ful," Marie responded. "We used to wear our snow-shoes when we went to Mass. You should see our snow-shoes, grandfather!" (it had become so easy to call him that.) "All summer they hang in a row in the garret—large and small, down to the baby's. And the weather! You would think it terrible, but we did not mind it; and often, when I was little, Madame Picard and I would go on the big sled with the *curé* to visit his mission stations. Sometimes the snow would be drifted so that we could not see the fences, and could only follow the lines of cedar bushes; and many times, the *curé* would have to get out and push the sled, when the fat pony could not get over the worst places. Once a great snow-storm came on, and we might have been lost if some lumbermen had not passed near. They were going into camp for the night, and you cannot think what music their songs were to us. They were *voyageurs*, who fished and hunted in summer and went to the lumber camps in winter. They would rather be poor and free up there than what you call 'civilized' here, grandfather. And they are good men

mostly, though so rough; and they were very respectful to the *curé*, and asked for his blessing. We stayed at the camp all night, and in the morning Father Picard set up his altar and said Mass. You cannot think how strange it was to see all the bright ornaments and clean vestments in that place. The men were all kind, if they were not very clean; and when we started again they made us take their warmest furs. And, then, in summer! Oh, you should see my country in summer!"

"*Your* country!" exclaimed Mr. Atkinson, giving the fire a petulant poke. She knew the meaning of that frown between his eyes.

"Yes, *my* country. Why not? For myself, I hardly know what I am, being the Queen's subject with a French father and a nice Yankee grandfather. However, the Saguenay region is my country. But where was I? Oh, yes. The summer is not long, but each day is pieced out by the twilight; and then we would take our canoes up the shore, and run the rapids coming back. I don't suppose you ever ran a rapid in your life, did you

grandfather?" (As Mr. Atkinson did not seem to heed her question, she went on.) "And the berry camps? We wore our big straw-hats, and had our berry boxes strapped to our shoulders; for one had to climb the cliffs. And while we worked—though it was really more play than work—our mothers sat by the camp-fire, knitting and keeping the coffee warm. Going home at night we would all sing, sometimes hymns to Our Lady, sometimes boat songs. This was one"—and she trilled a little *chanson.* (The servants listened in the hall without, and the old housekeeper wiped her eyes, having sung that song herself long before.) "Oh, yes!" concluded Marie, "the summers were most sweet, but I think I liked best the winters. Oh, that is such a beautiful white country in winter!"

"It makes me shiver just to hear about it. Do you like it better than this?"

"Far, far better," she answered, wondering how any one in his right mind could make the comparison. "Perhaps you will come and see it after I go back."

He frowned. "If you entertain any thought of going back to that heathenish

place, please keep them from me, and forget them as soon as possible; for you must not go back, my child."

"Not go back! Why, I promised. We do not break promises in St. Genevieve. And, besides, I wish to go back; and, besides that"—here her grandfather's own unconquerable spirit spoke in her—"I *intend* to go back!"

"But I will not allow it, my dear," he said, roused in his turn.

"Not allow it!" she replied, her dark eyes opening wide. "Not allow it! Pierre will allow it, and that is enough. He is my father in the law, you know; and he is such a good man," she went on, trying to assuage the pain her words had caused. "He has told me often of the night we got there, my mother and I; and afterward—but it was others who told me that—he went without many things that I might have comforts. He said he must try and make up to me for losing my mother."

The old housekeeper passed through the room, listening and looking askance at the fair-haired girl with the dark eyes, who seemed to interest her master to

such a wonderful degree. But Marie did not notice her; or noticing, did not care.

"We must have some sort of an understanding," said the old man, as she fixed the cushions so that his head might rest more comfortably. "At least you can come and make me a visit."

"But, really, grandfather—"

"There is no 'really' about it. When you are in that confounded Canada, I suppose that Frenchman has some authority; but in New York you are my grandchild, and my house is the only proper place for you."

He was getting excited and nervous again, and the young girl humored him; sending to Mrs. Thompson's for her few belongings, and sitting in state behind the coffee-urn after the early Christmas dinner.

It was the old story repeated. As the days wore on, what had been a duty, became a pleasure. She was surrounded with an atmosphere of luxury, whose seductions were hard to withstand. Her clothes were pronounced ridiculous, and she was taken in hand by a *modiste* in a fashionable shop on Fifth Avenue; while

the old blue gowns were hidden away, to be wept over at intervals when she was alone. And, the truth must be told, those hours of wild weeping were growing fewer. It was easy to lead that sweet new existence: to sit with her kind grandfather in a box at the Metropolitan, watching the mimic life of the stage and the real life in the audience; to go now and then to elegant mansions, where the refinements of wealth made something poetic of the art of dining; to buy all the bright new books, and see all the rarest paintings; and to wear the dainty garments to which she so soon became habituated. The days had wings. This was the reality; it was the old life in Canada that was now the dream. The poison was entering her soul, and her grandfather knew it. He did not call it poison—oh, no!—but he was fully aware of what his kindness, and persistence, and wariness were doing. He did not openly interfere with Marie's religious life, trusting that time would gradually change that. And so it might, had not the child carried an antidote for moral poison safe in her heart—her love of

truth, and her devotion to the Blessed Mother, whose arms are always outstretched to bless and protect her children.

Marie had her mother's own room, whose furnishings were so touchingly out of date, never having been changed since its mistress chose between God and Mammon; and there she went to tell the beads of the plain little rosary that Mother Lachange had given her on the day of her First Communion. She had a true friend in the old priest who had been asked by the *curé* of St. Genevieve to look after the girl who was going out into the world among strangers. Father Sinsier was a busy man, but he could always stop for a brief chat, or to give a word of counsel. Unfortunately, however, he did not apprehend the insidious danger which threatened Marie; or, if he realized it, he did not fail to trust her. She was so brave and true, that "surely," he thought, "no harm can come from a winter with her grandfather; and in the spring the child will be going home." He had heard from his friend that Pierre's mother was ailing.

Mr Atkinson, meanwhile, was con-

cerned with his granddaughter's education. He procured a governess, who was to act as chaperon as well; and requested her to undertake the proper moulding of Miss Aubrey's mind and manners. But in some mysterious way, they seemed to have been already trained; and Miss Brown came, almost in tears, to her employer. Some of the things the lady thought proper for the child to learn, she would not listen to, and in some branches she seemed to wish to instruct her teacher. This was Miss Brown's complaint.

Mr. Atkinson sought his granddaughter. "What is this I hear of you, my dear?" he asked. "Miss Brown says you laugh at her."

"Oh, I am afraid I did. Who could help it? Her history is so funny! And it is not true, some of it—not one bit true!" The little foot came down very decidedly upon the floor as she spoke.

"May I ask how you came to be wise enough to judge between true history and false?"

She did not notice the sarcasm. "Oh,

Madame Picard taught me. She knows every bit of true history that ever was written, I am sure. And she told me all about the saints; and how to name a flower that you never saw before; and how the stars are set together in little families. She does know so much, grandfather—even some Greek; and about the grand cathedrals, and the pictures in the art galleries across the ocean. And Miss Brown's French—I could not make it out, and she was angry, and said all the Canadians talked a *patois*—oh, grandfather, it was so droll!"

"My child, you had better take breath. I am sure I do not wonder that poor Miss Brown was disconcerted."

"You had better let her stay so, grandfather. I don't wish to learn things."

"What in Heaven's name do you wish, you perverse child?"

"In the first place, that you would speak with reverence of Heaven; then, I would like to buy a beautiful marble cross, as white as snow, for my mother's grave; and I would like to give Pierre a new fur coat and another cow. I cannot think of anything else just now."

Miss Brown was sent away, and no further attempt was made to educate Marie.

VIII.

Spring came again. The grass in the square was green; smart new clothes were seen on the avenue; and a pair of robins, fancying themselves in the country, were building a nest in one of the elms.

"When is your birthday, Mary?" asked Mr. Atkinson one May morning (he would never give her the French form of her name).

A shadow flitted over her face as she answered: "How can I know, grandfather—I who never have birthdays?"

He saw his blunder, and said, confusedly and hurriedly, trying to undo his words: "Of course not; I quite forgot. But I have it set down somewhere. Your mother wrote to me soon after you were born, and I—may God forgive me!"

"He will forgive," said Marie, pityingly. "Even *I* have forgiven—almost," the last word under her breath.

The date was found, and her birthday celebrated as she wished. She would have no gifts, but asked instead that some fruit and flowers be sent to the Sisters' hospital, of which Father Sensier was chaplain. Mr. Atkinson, amazed at himself beyond measure, lent the light of his majestic old face to the feast which followed. He would make no further concessions to Mary's religious scruples, he thought. The time was approaching when she must be told that the quicker she got rid of her odious superstitions the better; he would not have her under the dominion of those false ideas with which she had been imbued by semi-barbarians. He wished to give an entertainment, and introduce her formally to society. But she protested, feeling that it would commit her to a path in which she might not tread.

The letters which came from Madame Picard brought no good news. Pierre was doing better, it was true; but his

mother was ailing. "She is trying to live until you and the summer come, dear little one!" the words ran on. Poor Madame Picard! She did not say how she herself, longed for her young friend.

Marie was silent and thoughtful after that letter came. She felt that a crisis was near, and questioned herself steadily and remorselessly that night in the pretty chamber where her mother had dreamed and prayed before her. There were two paths, Marie knew; and—she would be frank with herself—treading one would be like strolling through a garden where the flowers made a carpet for her feet; walking in the other would be climbing a rugged mountain; but it would be going towards heaven. And the former—she dared not think of the pitfalls beneath the rose petals. She took a little book of devotion from her table, and opened it at these words: "If two roads lie before thee, and thou knowest not which to follow, choose that which is fullest of thorns." Hard words, perhaps, but God had sent them. She pondered no longer. The way was clear,

and her mind made up even before the morning's mail brought another letter. "She is failing," it said; "she cannot live a week. Come, little one, and receive her blessing."

There was no cowardly parleying with her conscience now, as she changed her soft, pretty garments for those she had worn so long. The collar of the rough gown chafed her throat, but she did not care. Then she went down to the library to break the news of her going away to her grandfather.

IX.

Mr. Atkinson was deep in the perusal of the *North American Review*, but turned his head as Marie, with a heavier tread than usual, entered the room.

"Grandfather," she said, coming to the case in hand at once, "I am going home."

He looked up, bewildered. Could there be a taint of madness in her blood? What meant that coarse gown, made in

that extraordinary fashion, and those heavy shoes? He would be gentle with her.

"My dear," he said, placidly, "are you going to a masquerade?"

"I am going home. I have a letter. See! Mother Lachange is dying, and she wishes only to see me." The soft voice faltered. "I am going to-day, and I have put on the old clothes. She would not know me in the new ones."

"You are not going to do this ridiculous thing, Mary. I forbid it."

"I supposed you would," she answered, sadly. "I would like to obey you, but I must go; and I came to say good-bye."

"I'll not have you saying good-bye. You are not going anywhere, except to Mrs. King's dinner. You are quite the fashion; they call you unique. The roses will be here at five o'clock. Now run away, and I will finish this article. It beats the mischief what arguments this fellow advances."

"It is no use, grandfather. When the roses come, I shall be gone. I found out about the trains in the paper."

The old man threw the *Review* on the

floor and burst out: "Confound it, Mary! You'll drive me into another illness. I tell you, you shall *not* go!"

She only shook her head.

"Don't you owe me anything?" he stormed.

"I owe you much, but I owe them more."

"I will see the British Consul," he continued, "and have those beggars brought to time."

"*They* are not the beggars; it was I who was the beggar when they took me in; and, grandfather—"

"You need not 'grandfather' me if you will not heed a word I say."

"And," she went on, "if, since I have been here, you have done much for me, I have tried to do something for you. You said, you know, that my nursing cured you. But if I have seemed happy, too happy, I think my heart was true to them all the while. And now I am going back."

Then came from his lips such bitter words as would ill suit these pages. He bade her begone, and she took him at his word. The stout little shoes clattered

over the polished floor, and the disappointed old man took up the *Review* with trembling hands, not seeing one word before him.

Marie went over to take leave of the Thompson children. Their mother was out.

"What have you got on those old clothes for?" inquired Stanley, in disgust. "You're rich now. Mother said you could get all Mr. Atkinson's money if you played your cards right. I didn't know you knew how to play cards."

"Give this note to your mother, Stanley; and you must come to St. Genevieve when it is warm."

The children were perplexed. What dreadful thing had happened to drag her away? They clung to her gown—her old blue gown; but she put their little hands one side. She could not, she thought, endure more of these partings. Then she kissed them, and telling them not to forget the Blessed Lady of whom she had taught them, tore herself away.

That afternoon a young girl, wearing a close bonnet, and a homespun gown, stepped into the Quebec train, north-

ward bound. She had no more doubts; she knew she was doing right; yet her heart ached for the proud old man who had, as he so often said, no one but her, and whom she had disobeyed.

"Oh, grandfather!" she whispered, behind her veil, "do you think I have given up nothing?"

She knew what was before her: the long, ice-bound winters; the stone cottage, with its smell of fish; the berry-picking, and the spinning; but she put those things out of her mind, and tried to remember how softly the sun of early summer was falling upon her mother's grave; on the still river, with a beauty like none other; and of the quiet church, where she must go at once on her arrival, to pray God to make her a good girl, and to thank Him that she was safe at home again.

She was fortunate in catching the Saguenay boat at Quebec, and early one morning stepped off at St. Genevieve. No one was stirring except the men at the wharf, the hurrying tide had brought the steamer in at an unusual hour. She trod the familiar path like a young fawn,

unheeding the comments of tourists who were beginning to swarm to the region. Pierre saw her coming, and met her.

"The mother—?" asked Marie.

"Alive, God be thanked!" said Pierre, in his rough, peasant speech, so sweet now, to her ears.

She went into the house and fell on her knees beside the bed. "I have come back!" was all she could say.

"God be thanked?" feebly murmured the dying woman, in Pierre's own words.

Marie felt that peace was there where people thanked God as freely as they drew their breath, and a sweet content stole into her soul. The city life was as if it had never been. As to her grandfather she could only pray for him.

Mother Lachange lingered until night. Her peace with heaven was made, and her child was at home again; so she died a happy woman, her hand clasped in Marie's and her lips moving until the end in response to the *cure's* prayers. The whole community turned out to do her honor when the stout arms of her neighbors bore her to her grave on the hillside.

There was a little council held after the burial.

"Yes, I have come back to stay," said Marie. "I do not like the world."

"But your grandfather?"

A tear stole trembling down her cheek.

"I see," remarked Madame Picard. "The grandfather is in your heart to stay, and you desolate yourself for him.

"But I love you all, and I am at home. That is enough. And he will do without me just as he did before."

"And everything will be just as it was," exclaimed the elder lady, "except that the poor Mother Lachange is gone, and little Pierre is big enough to drive the cow!"

"Nothing is ever the same again," replied Marie, looking over where the sunshine lay upon two graves.

"There is the boat!" said Pierre. Though mothers died, and were buried, he must see that the steward had his usual supply of trout. The others gazed after him, and then, hand in hand, strolled down to the landing. The passengers crowded on shore, and some,

who had come to stay, mounted the quaint vehicles in waiting, and were driven to the hotel. Madame Picard felt the hand in her own tremble. An old man, half a head taller than any one about him, stepped off briskly, followed by his servant.

"It is my grandfather!" cried Marie, and ran toward him. There was no scene, such as the emotional French lady expected. Mr. Atkinson acted as if going to St. Genevieve were an affair of daily occurrence.

"Mary," he said, looking at her black dress, "you were right not to wait for me. And what a heavenly place this is!"

Then Madame Picard was duly presented, and made one of her state courtesies. Here was a hero of the old fashion, she thought; no wonder he had crept into the little one's heart.

In that "heavenly place" Mr. Atkinson abides to-day. He is always threatening to go back; but, excepting for brief sojourns which are necessitated by business, he never does. On one of those flying journeyings he took Marie and Madame Picard, the latter going, as

she said, "to look at the States." She professed to be pleased with everything, but will not admit that New York is like Paris, as people have so often declared to her.

Mr. Atkinson has built a pretty cottage, and from Marie's own room she can see the quiet grave where all that is mortal of her mother sleeps, and over which there is now the fair white cross she longed for. Her grandfather is happier than ever before. He has taken a great fancy to Pierre, who is always an honored guest, and the guide in fishing-parties when people come from what Marie still calls "the world" to visit him. Even the winters are all too short; for the pretty villa is stored with books, new and old, and the art treasures of the mansion in Madison Square have found their way inside its hospitable walls.

Madame Picard and the owner of that house have become fast friends, always engaged in some friendly controversy or congenial inquiry into scientific problems. The dear old lady declares that in time she will convert "Monsieur Grandfather"

to the true faith, in which endeavor she has our best wishes.

As to Marie, she feels that the cup of life holds no greater joys than she possesses. If she has one pleasure greater than the others, it is in making the lives of the peasantry less hard ; for her grandfather attempts no abridgement of her charities. Having been so poor, in worldly goods, herself, she can feel for the poor ; and her soft footstep is known far and near in the humbler cottages of the parish. She does not always give money, for it is not always needed ; many times it is only a little love she leaves behind, out of that wealth of love for all who suffer or sorrow, with which her heart is filled.

If Marie has a sorrow, it is when she thinks of her poor father, who died far away from home and friends. She corresponds occasionally with his people—not grand folk, as she in her childish days imagined ; but just worthy shopkeepers in Lyons. From them she has learned the story of his death : how he sent her mother, whose health was failing, to the bracing air of the north,

intending to join her shortly; how business for his employers took him south, where he died alone, not knowing that his wife was already in the fair, far country to which the just, first or last, all journey. And the good people never knew, until she wrote to them, that their son had left a child.

So the young girl keeps up this pleasant correspondence with them, those far-away relatives whom she has never seen; and by Mr. Atkinson's invitation, two of them are soon to undertake a sea-voyage and pay a visit to America. They are assiduously studying English, the two cousins write, and would be glad if Marie would answer in that language; in sentences, they add, "not too difficult." The following missive has gone in reply, and may serve to give pleasure to those who have followed this little story:

"My Dear Cousins:—How strange it seems every time I call you that! How wonderful to think that I, who thought myself without kindred, have more cousins real cousins, than I can count on all

my fingers! Greet them all for me, even the baby; who has, I trust, got over the illness which you say has made him so cross. Poor little fellow! I wonder if we would be as amiable as he under the same circumstances?

"Perhaps the surest way to write just what you would wish to have me, is to look over your letter and answer your questions. How do I look? My dears, I do not know. I am too busy ever to think about it. I only know that Madame Picard says I am careless of my complexion, liking the sun too well; and that grandfather says I have my mother's fair hair, and my father's French eyes—eyes like those, I fancy, that will study over this English letter. If you had asked me of my grandfather—the most beautiful old gentleman—or of Madame Picard—the dearest old lady in all the Province, I do believe—I might have told you.

"Your next question: What was the chief thing I learned in my visit to the great world? in which you have honored me by being so interested. Just this—I learned that people who are good and poor are a hundred times better off than

the gay ones, who whirl around in the awful struggle for riches.

"My employer was a wealthy woman, and I do not believe that in all St. Genevieve there is one so miserable as she—though the people here have sad enough times, the good God knows, when the fishing is poor, or the crops fail. I hope you will not call this preaching. No, I leave that to others whose business it is; but I shall never, I think, if I live to be a very old woman, forget that lesson.

"Yes, as you say, my history has been a strange one, as far as it has gone; but God's hand has led me through it all. He has given me my grandfather, and, through him, my cousins over the sea; and He has taught me many things which I cannot trust myself to write about. When you come here in the spring, and we get better acquainted, I will tell you what I mean.

"I hope you will not find my letter 'too difficult,' and that the baby is quite well again. Pray for me, dear cousins, far away, and believe me

"Your loving

"MARIE."

And so the "dear cousins far away" bend their bright eyes over the letter, with their dictionaries near at hand, slowly making out the kindly words.

And Marie? What can harm her? A supreme test came, and she withstood it when she put on her peasant gown and chose between the two paths before her. So we leave her, in the care of the Blessed One whom no temptation could induce her to forsake--Our Lady of the Saguenay.

A TALE THE BRETONS TELL.

I.

Among the popular traditions that used to be, and for aught we know still are current at Clisson, in the Vendée, was that of the "Turning Rock." It was religiously believed by the peasantry that just at midnight, on Christmas Eve, an enormous rock in a warren bordering on the Sèvres, turned of its own accord upside-down, thus signalizing the hour of the Saviour's birth.

About half a century ago, a French gentleman, named De Montmaur, seeing that his two sons, who had been reared in the vicinity of Clisson, believed in the Turning Rock, decided one Christmas Eve, to convince them that this tradition, like many others in vogue among the

peasantry had no foundation in fact. "Believe in miracles, my dear boys," said he; "but do not credit every idle tale you hear. To refuse to bend your reason before the great mystery that is commemorated to-night would be both stupidity and pride; to accept as true every old nurse's tale would be silliness."

An hour before midnight M. de Montmaur and his sons, George and Louis, left the Providence Inn, where they had taken up their quarters, and proceeded to the warren. The night was calm and peaceful; the azure dome sparkled with a million stars, as if illumined especially for the approaching solemnity; and the moon shone in their midst like a queen surrounded by her courtiers. The vast ruins of an old castle near by borrowed from the pearl-grey beams that clothed them as with a mantle, a melancholy aspect, that harmonized well with the thoughts of the inevitable decay awaiting the proudest works of man;—thoughts that such battered remnants of former stateliness always suggest.

"In the absence of Midnight Mass,

my boys," said the father, "we can at least, with such a spectacle before our eyes, raise our hearts to God."

"Yes," replied one of the youths; "in the solemn silence that surrounds us, there is something as soothing as the softest music. And when one listens it almost seems that he hears Nature breathing."

The three continued their walk in silence till they reached the Turning Rock. "Look well now," said M. de Montmaur. "Midnight is at hand, and you will see that the rock does not turn." Scarcely had he finished speaking when a distant bell rang out the hour.

The two boys, their hearts throbbing with excitement, as is always the case when we expect something supernatural to occur, hardly breathed as they gazed fixedly at the rock, which, according to tradition, should have begun to turn, but which, nevertheless, remained motionless. They were still gazing when from the base of the rock there came a sound. It was not a noise such as would be made by the moving of one rock over another; there was nothing awful in the sound—

it was the feeble and tremulous plaint of a little infant. Thoroughly surprised, M. de Montmaur hastily pushed aside the shrubbery that grew about the foot of the rock, and found, resting in a sort of niche, a wicker cradle, in which lay a baby perhaps three weeks or a month old. The child was well wrapped up in woolen blankets, and the cradle covered with a quilt; but, notwithstanding these precautions, the cold had penetrated to the delicate little body, and the cry they had heard was its plaintive signal of distress. The father and his sons quickly carried the child, cradle and all, to their inn, and gave the little stranger into the care of the landlady.

On taking the baby from its cradle, the good matron found hanging about its neck a blue ribbon, to which was attached a silver medal of the Blessed Virgin bearing the device, "*Consolatrix Afflictorum.*" She also discovered a sealed letter that had been attached to the wicker-work of the cradle. The seal represented a ship buffeted by the waves, and bore the inscription: "To the care of God." On the back of the en-

velope was written: "To whomsoever finds my child."

M. de Montmaur, remarking that he could open the letter as he was the first to perceive the child, did so; and read, at first to himself, and then aloud:

"'My child has been baptized. . . . If I have abandoned it for a time, it is because I was obliged to hasten to its father, who has just been condemned to death. Christians, take pity on the poor little girl, whom I bequeath to God, the Blessed Virgin, and you. The sad news of my husband's imprisonment, and his condemnation forces me to leave her. . . . Alas! perhaps I shall be too late. You who are charitable and compassionate, do not blame me, but care for my darling little Mary. . . . I leave her at the Turning Rock, knowing that curiosity will bring some of the credulous here before morning. May God, the Blessed Virgin, and the holy angels watch over her cradle!'"

When he had concluded the letter, which affected himself not less than his

auditors, M. de Montmaur said: "It is not on so holy a night as this that one can refuse aid to a helpless child. I therefore undertake to care for the little girl until her mother returns to claim her."

This engagement was faithfully kept. Mary Warren (so she was called by the family into which she was adopted) grew up in grace, beauty and piety, and became an accomplished girl. Mme. de Montmaur lavished on her education all the care that she would have bestowed on a daughter of her own, had God so blessed her. The family never learned anything of Mary's mother. Inquiries were instituted, but proved unavailing; it was ascertained only that a great many royalists, compromised in the political affairs of Bretagne, had been shot near Saint-Brieuc. Whether the little girl's mother had died shortly after her husband's execution, or was still living, was unknown to all.

It is rare that one has cause to repent of having performed a good action; and Mme. de Montmaur sometimes said to her husband: "If Mary's mother were to appear, what a void the dear girl's de-

parture would leave in our family circle! We have become so accustomed to look upon her as our daughter, and our boys to love her as tenderly as a sister, that a separation would be a real calamity. George and Louis, as you know, are of rather grave temperaments, and seldom ministered to the gaiety of our home; Mary came as a lasting joy into our midst, and gave to us what was lacking."

A separation, however, between Mary and the young men was now at hand. It had ever been a part of their father's plans for the education of his sons, that they should enjoy a season of travel. He had just secured an admirable tutor to accompany them; and one day the youths with mingled regret at leaving a home circle so cherished, and joy over anticipated delights, set out for a tour through Southern France and Italy.

II.

After some months spent in visiting all the notable cities of Italy, with their inexhaustible treasures of art, our young travellers, George and Louis, accompanied Mr. Gervais, their tutor, on an expedition to which they had looked forward with more than ordinary pleasure. This was a visit to the snow-bound regions of the Alps, associated in their minds with the stirring deeds of Hannibal, Cæsar, and Napoleon; and also, with heroes of another and more beneficial, if less brilliant order—the pious monks of St. Bernard.

Both young men were charmed with the hospitality that greeted them in the Great. Hospice, and listened with appreciative interest to the tales of lives saved from imminent peril through the sagacity and courage of the noble dogs and their devoted masters. One of the singular spectacles of the monastery was to be seen in an outer chapel, where numerous dead bodies, carefully arranged, awaited identification. These corpses

exhaled no offensive odor; and, owing to the low temperature, were but little altered by their exposure. One corpse especially attracted the attention of George de Montmaur. It was that of a poor mother clasping to her icy breast her infant child. Death itself had not separated the loved one from her embrace.

Speaking to the Father Abbé, that evening, of the impression made upon him by what he had seen and heard during the day, George mentioned the corpses of mother and child in the chapel. "Ah! yes," said the Abbé, "it is an affecting sight. But another mother, three years ago, moved our sympathy even more; and she still lives. She came here in company with the Duchess of Devonshire. She was the widow of a Vendean; her husband, with a number of other Breton gentlemen, had become compromised by political action; and although she hastened to his prison, it was only to see him led out and shot. She was not allowed even to embrace him; and on witnessing his execution she lost her reason. Her madness

was not at all dangerous to others, but it might easily have injured herself, as she sang, twenty times a day, political songs that were then proscribed. To save her from the prison that menaced her—for she, too, had been denounced as having carried on treasonable correspondence—an English lady took her out of France. Placed under the care of skillful physicians in London, her madness gradually wore away ; and the Duchess of Devonshire, desiring a French companion, secured her services.

" During their sojourn at the Hospice, the noble duchess was extremely kind to us ; and I remember that she gave her companion a copy of the ' Genius of Christianity,' that she might read to us what Chateaubriand, says of our house. I can certify that the widow was then fully possessed of her reason, but on the following day she saw us carrying to the chapel the dead bodies of the mother and child in question. At the time she was kneeling before a statue of the Blessed Virgin. When she saw our burden she rose abruptly, and, with arms outstretched toward Our Lady, with ani-

mated countenance, and eyes fixed on the image, she cried out, in tones that echoed loudly through the chapel: 'Mother of Christ, thou hast not given *me* this happiness! See, they are not separated; but I—I have no longer my beloved child!'"

"You say she was the widow of a Vendean. Do you know from what part of La Vendée she came?" inquired George, who had been manifesting extraordinary interest in the recital.

"Yes; she mentioned Clisson once or twice at first."

"Did she name her daughter?" asked George.

"Yes, quite often after this outburst of grief."

"And how was her child called?"

"Mary."

"Mary! And do you know, Father, where this woman is at present?"

"Yes, my son. With the Brothers of St. John of God, at Lyons."

"Then she relapsed into madness?"

"Alas! yes; she is completely insane."

"O Louis, Mr. Gervais, let us go at once!" cried George, excitedly. "We

shall see the poor mother at Lyons. We will assure her that her daughter still lives; that she shall behold her again, and will never more be separated from her. Her joy will restore her to reason. What thanks do we not owe you, Father! You give to a mother her child, to a loving daughter her lost mother, and to all our family the purest joy."

Next morning George was first to arise; and going down to the chapel, he heard the early Mass. After praying before the image of Our Lady that had witnessed the relapse of Mary's mother, he told the sacristan that he had promised to hang a beautiful silver lamp before the Madonna's statue, if the afflicted mother recovered her mind. "Oh, how happy I shall be," he added, "if I can shortly send you my *ex-voto!*"

Taking leave of the hospitable monks the travellers started a few hours later for Lyons. On their arrival in that city, they at once proceeded to the asylum, where they learned from the superior of the Brothers that the woman whom they sought, although still insane, gave some hope of possible cure.

"Is she fit now to travel?" inquired George.

"Yes, provided the journey be made by short stages, as she is still very weak."

"Then," said Mr. Gervais, "we shall leisurely take her with us to Bretagne. Be kind enough, Father, to prepare the widow of the Vendean to accompany us, so that we may restore to her arms the daughter whom she thinks lost, and whom she has so bitterly lamented."

"The joy which you are about to give her may prove as disastrous as the greatest misfortune," said the superior; "especially, if bestowed suddenly. Alas! not to cause her to die for very joy, when she has suffered so terribly, you must take many precautions. The heart so long unused to comfort, may break, if flooded all at once with so great a happiness."

"Have no fears, Father; we will lead your patient gradually to the possession of the joy that awaits her."

Three days later the three friends of Mary, with her poor mother, began their journey to Bretagne. George would

often introduce into the conversation names that must have been familiar to her in other days; but she evinced not the slighest interest in them, and they evidently recalled no impression to her disordered brain. This was a sad disappointment to her travelling companions, as both Mr. Gervais and the young men had counted much on her manifesting an awakening of interest in allusions to former well-known scenes.

One evening, however, while the horses were being changed, Louis happened to remark to his brother: "Look over there in that field; that big rock reminds me of the Turning Rock at Clisson."

At these words, the widow, who was crouching in the rear of the carriage, and whom they had thought asleep, suddenly bent forward, and looked out in the direction indicated. She gazed for a moment on the rock that lay bathed in the moonlight, then turned away, and raised her glance to heaven. George, who sat facing her, noticed tears falling from her large black eyes and dropping like pearls on her sombre dress. He saw,

too, the thin white hands convulsively contracted, and felt that the dagger of sorrow was piercing the broken heart anew.

"She suffers, and is praying," thought he; and forthwith he began to hum an old Breton Christmas carol. The air, which she must have heard time and again, would perhaps recall to her mind that fatal Christmas night of bygone years. For some minutes she listened; and when George stopped, she said to him:

"Mr. George, continue to sing that air; it does me good."

"You remember it, then?"

"I think I must have heard it, but it was a long, long time ago," she replied.

"It is a song of our country."

"Of your country?"

"Yes, and of yours, too."

"Alas! where is my country? I know it no longer. I am only a poor withered leaf that the wind whirls about at will. But I don't know the tree from which I have fallen, to lie in the dust, be trampled underfoot, then carried away again by the tempest."

"There are fine trees in the warren at Clisson."

"Clisson! I have heard tell of Clisson. It is not in England, it is not in Scotland, not in Italy—for, you know, I have travelled all through there with the duchess. Where is Clisson, then? Tell me, Mr. George."

"In Bretagne, near Nantes."

"Bretagne, Nantes! Nantes, Bretagne! All that gets lost and mixed up in my poor head. Oh, how I would bless the hand that could tear away the veil that falls and shuts me out from my memory!—Look here! See now, if you can, the beautiful firmament all sprinkled with golden stars." As she spoke she placed her hand over the young man's eyes. "You see nothing, eh?—because my hand is between your eyes and the sky. Well, there is always something between my memory and the places of which you speak. Clisson! Since you have said that word it is here on my heart like a leaden ball. At Clisson there is an old castle in ruins, is there not?"

"Yes."

"The river flows down below the old castle?"

"Yes," repeated George; "and on the opposite bank there are——"

"Many trees and fine walks."

"Yes; and near the oaks—do you remember?"

"I remember nothing," she said, faintly.

"You mistake; you have just remembered the castle, the river, the trees, and promenades. If you like you can remember——"

"What?"

"The Turning Rock."

"Ah, you are cruel as an executioner! I did not want that place to come back to my thoughts, and you have come to dig it out of a fold in my brain, to hold it, all blood-stained, before my memory, and bind me to it, to suffer torture. Go out of my sight! I wish never to see you again!"

A nervous attack followed this outburst; and it was fortunate that the travellers were near Auxerre, in which city they were to remain for the night. Mr. Gervais and Louis helped the widow out

of the carriage; she refused the aid of him who had forced on her the recollection of the Turning Rock in the warren.

III.

The patient spent a disturbed and restless night. She was still so agitated on the following morning that the journey could not be resumed, as had been arranged; and Mr. Gervais profited by the delay to visit an old friend, the Abbé Cervon, canon of the Auxerre Cathedral. This estimable priest had so identified himself with the Cathedral that he might well be considered an integral part of it. As a boy he had been a server in its sanctuary; a young man, he had celebrated his first Mass at its grand altar; and now, in the decline of his days, he had returned, after an absence of twenty years, to finish his sacred ministry where he had begun it, within the shadow of its venerable towers. God, and God's poor, his beloved Cathedral, and his books filled up his time, except when his bishop, with

whom he was a favorite, took him as a companion in his visitations throughout the diocese. One result of these occasional visits was the intimate acquaintance of the Abbé Cervon with all his brother pastors.

Mr. Gervais, in the course of his conversation with the venerable priest, explained his presence in Auxerre by narrating a portion of the story which we have already told. When he mentioned that the unfortunate mother was then in Auxerre, unable for the time being to proceed farther, the abbé interrupted him with: "My dear friend, it was God who directed you hither: it was He who prevented your departing this morning before having seen me. All this is providential. Your unhappy travelling companion will be cured by one of our parish priests, who for the past five years has worked marvellous cures in mental diseases of this nature—cures which have obtained for him on the one hand innumerable blessings; on the other, jealousy, and hatred. His method of treatment has in it something that much delights me. He calls to his aid, to effect a res-

toration, something besides drugs and potions: religion, poetry, music, the tender affections of the soul—these are his auxiliaries. He will delight you, my dear Gervais, as he has enchanted me. Let us leave here to-night. We will sleep in his village, endeavoring to arrive there without his knowledge of my being in his parish; otherwise no inn could retain us: he would surely carry us off to his house, or rather his hospital. He is a patriarch who exercises hospitality as it was exercised in the old days; and I verily believe that, as a recompense for his charity, God permits His angels to converse with him as they were wont to do with Abraham and Jacob. It must have been one of those celestial visitants who taught him his art of curing the insane."

The abbé spoke with such genuine enthusiasm, and such evident faith in the utility of the proposed visit, that he inspired Mr. Gervais with a kindred belief. The tutor at once returned to the inn, and consulted with the brothers as to their next procedure. It was decided to follow the good abbé's advice, and toward three in the afternoon, the party

set out for the medical pastor's village. The widow entered the carriage mechanically, and gave no other sign of intelligence than to motion Louis to the seat opposite her, which hitherto had been occupied by George.

The village was reached at sunset. The party put up at the first inn they came to—the "Green Cross"; and, after installing Mary's mother in a private room, in charge of an attendant, the Abbé Cervon conducted the tutor and his pupils to the residence of the pastor. The presbytery was a modest dwelling, with a spacious garden in front; climbing plants grew up around the windows, the fragrant blossoms filling the apartments with a pleasant odor that blended well with the air of peaceful happiness which pervaded all the surroundings of the doctor-priest.

"My dear *Curé*," said the canon of Auxerre on entering, "I have brought you some friends and a patient."

"Welcome all! If you had with you only friends, my joy at seeing you again, M. l'Abbé, would be complete. But a patient is a sad travelling companion.

Suffering has need of so much repose."

"You will cure her for us, my excellent doctor," said the canon.

"My dear friend, we will ask God, who cures and resuscitates, to restore her to health. It is He, whose unworthy minister I am, that cures, not I."

Mr. Gervais and the canon then explained to the *curé* the condition of the afflicted woman, and the interest they took in her restoration. After some further conversation, it was decided that on the morrow Mary's mother should be removed from the Green Cross Inn, and brought to the hospital that adjoined the presbytery.

"Alas!" said the *curé*, "I have here a number afflicted in the same way. Insanity is the disease of an age like ours. When nations are seized with the delirium of pride, so many distresses rend hearts, so many inquietudes agitate and torment minds, that it is not rare to see strong heads letting escape the reason with which God abundantly provided them."

The conversation had been prolonged for an hour or more, when it was inter-

rupted by the sound of a little bell. "Ah!" said the abbé, "that calls your patients to evening prayer, do not allow us to detain you."

"Yes, but this exercise is for the ordinary patients; I have a special evening prayer later on for those who are most seriously afflicted. Among them are some who are not satisfied with praying through the priest; they desire to speak to God themselves and aloud. And I assure you, my friends, there frequently come from their hearts sublime invocations; these beings, who have no sane ideas as to the things of this world, occasionally have very just ones concerning the other. From these broken lyres there still escape beautiful strains of melody."

George and Louis inquired whether it would not be possible to be present during the prayers, and were told that they could attend by taking their seats in a curtained alcove of the chapel, where they would be unseen by the unfortunate lunatics. The *curé* went to preside at the prayers of his more amenable patients; and, returning a half hour later, conducted his four guests to the alcove

mentioned. Shortly afterward steps were heard, the chapel door opened, and eight women, led by a Sister robed in blue and black, entered, and, proceeding to the left row of pews, knelt down quietly. A few minutes later five men, conducted by a Brother of St. John of God, came in and took their places in the pews on the right. Then a grave, sweet prelude was played on the organ, and the poor creatures, whose glances on entering were wandering and distracted, at once became recollected. One of the men exclaimed aloud as he caught the first sound of the music: "Silence! God is speaking."

Little by little the harmony died away, melting gradually into silence; and the voice of the pastor began the evening prayer. Just as he concluded the organ was heard again, and surely sounds more expressive, more soul-moving, never broke on the silence of an oratory. The musician was a young Brother, and beneath his skilful touch there welled forth veritable human sighs and moans, followed by outbursts of confiding hope and sweet canticles of love.

This artist of Nature's own training

had himself been a lunatic ; for a number of years he had been confined in the asylum at Lyons, and he had regained his reason only after untiring care and patience had been lavished on him by the members of the community. Thoroughly sane at present, there remained in him nothing of the lunacy except the memory of what had penetrated to his soul when the hand of God weighed heavily upon him ; and he now gave to others what had administered to his own consolation in those sad days of endless blank. His memory served him well ; for the lunatics seemed to understand his music as they would a language which they had learned.

The exercises over, the men left the chapel, and the echo of their footsteps soon died away. Seven of the women then arose and followed the Sister to the door. The eighth remained kneeling before a statue of the Blessed Virgin, and appeared to have no intention of departing.

The Sister approached her and said gently : " Madame Margaret, your companions are waiting for you. Prayer is finished."

"Tut, tut, Sister! Take them to the dormitory and leave me here. The Comforter of the Afflicted spoke to me while Brother Hyacinth was playing the organ. I must stay here and pray. To-night the Virgin is going to restore to my arms my poor child."

"Well, remain quiet then, kneeling as you are now," said the religious. "I will come back in a little while and remain with you."

"Oh, I am not afraid here! I like to watch that lamp burning there before the altar. The flame is in that silver vase, living, active, just like the memory of my child in my heart. And, then, those angels that are adoring there—they would stop any one who wished to hurt me. And all these saints——"

She was still talking when, some time after the Sister retired, the spectators in the alcove arose and noiselessly withdrew.

"When Mary's mother comes here," remarked George, as they reached the open air, "she will find a twin sister in misfortune."

On the following day the widow was

brought to the hospital and given in charge to the *curé.* After a long examination, during which he contrived to rouse her from the taciturnity in which she had indulged since her relapse at Mount St. Bernard, he said to Mr. Gervais and his friends: "The flame may grow brilliant, but the lamp is almost worn out; the least shock may break it."

"Remember," said George, "that we have her daughter to restore to her. It was the blast of misfortune that extinguished the flame; the breath of joy will recreate the spark."

"Yes, the poor mother," observed the medical pastor, "must receive that happiness only drop by drop. It must reach her as the oculist allows the light to reach the eyes of one on whom he has performed an operation for the cataract. I fear so much," he added, "all emotional excitement, that I would prefer that the daughter should be brought to her here."

"Then my father shall bring her," answered George De Montmaur.

"In that case, I shall have much greater hope of effecting a cure."

"It will be just as you desire," said Mr. Gervais.

In a few moments it was decided that Mr. Gervais and Louis should leave at once for Bretagne, while George and the Abbé Cervon remained and partook of the hospitality of the venerable *curé*.

During the interval that elapsed before the arrival of the father and adopted sister, George had more leisure than he found opportunity to employ. Most of it he passed in observing, studying and admiring the genius of Charity as exemplified in the hospital. From dawn till the shadows fell a gentle supervision followed every movement of the nine female and five male lunatics who had been confided to "the good shepherd." In their walks, in their working-rooms, in their dormitories, the unfortunate beings were always under the eye of a religious. One thing they all especially loved was music; and Brother Hyacinth, who had played the organ in the chapel, spent the greater part of his time seated at a piano that had been placed in his little chamber. Before seating himself to play he would open his window and door; and as

soon as the patients heard the first notes they would come at once to his room. Seating themselves on benches, with their elbows resting on their knees, and supporting their chins in their hands, they would listen enraptured to the touching harmonies which the young religious evoked from his own soul to comfort theirs.

One morning George heard one of the men remark to a comrade: "He does me as much good as if he gave me a drink. His playing is like a glass of water when one has a fever." Another time, as he was sitting in a summer-house in the garden, George heard the voices of women. Looking through the trellis-work, he saw that they were two of the female patients, followed at some distance by a religious. One of the women was weeping bitterly, and the other, in whom he at once recognized Mary's mother, was endeavoring to console her.

"You at least," said the widow, "know where your child is. When the Blessed Virgin's little angels came to take him from his crib, they told you they were taking him to heaven. You know that

he is there. And when your son departed with the cherubim, he had known only the milk of your bosom, the pressure of your caresses, the kisses of your lips. Poor little dear! he knew only the honey of life. But *my* child, my sweet little Mary—what has become of her? Perhaps she has grown up only to suffer; perhaps nobody went that Christmas night to the Turning Rock at Clisson; perhaps she died of hunger, and her mother's bosom was not there to relieve the little angel."

At these words the comforter burst into tears; and George heard nothing further except mutual sobs mingling together, like the mournful strains of two æolian harps placed side by side.

This incident served only to heighten young De Montmaur's impatience for the arrival of his father and Mary, and the days seemed to him almost interminable. How long the hours were in passing! Would that expected party from Bretagne never arrive?

IV.

GEORGE'S anxious hopes were at last realized, when, one Sunday morning, there rolled up to the Green Cross Inn a post-carriage containing M. De Montmaur, Mary, Louis, and Mr. Gervais. Having warmly greeted his father, George turned to his adopted sister, and anticipated her wishes by telling her at once of her mother's condition. Again and again he repeated such consolatory phrases as: "The good *curé* has great hopes.—She is quite calm.—We have only one thing to fear: the excess of her joy on learning of your existence."

"And this joy," answered Mary, "she and I owe especially to you, George. Mr. Gervais and Louis have told me the whole story. How can I ever thank you enough?" And she gave her hand to the young man, who as he gazed upon her beautiful countenance, wreathed with grateful smiles, suddenly became cognizant of a sentiment of relief that Mary was his adopted sister only, not a real relative.

"My child," said M. De Montmaur to Mary, "you will remain here with your maid. We, after we get rid of the dust of travel, will proceed to the presbytery, and pay our respects to the good priest from whom we expect so much happiness."

"O father," cried Mary, "let me accompany you! I may perhaps see her."

"And you will not be calm enough to restrain yourself at the sight."

"I will answer for myself. George, you will answer for me, too; will you not?"

"No not this time. I really cannot. It makes one so sad to look upon her! You can see, despite her beauty, that she has suffered cruelly."

"Then she is beautiful!" said the girl, with a daughter's pride.

"You resemble her, Mary," rejoined George. "Take my advice, sister, and postpone your visit to the hospital until this evening. You can then be present at the night prayer, the devotion which your mother loves best. She has contracted a strong friendship with another mother who has also lost her child.

Both have a tender devotion for the Virgin who found her Divine Son in the Temple; and sometimes the Sister who has charge of them allows them to remain in the chapel after the other patients have retired. Perhaps this evening they may be accorded this privilege, and from a screened alcove you will see and hear everything. It is then and there, as you will see, that all the tenderness of your mother's heart is best revealed."

"My poor mother! Very well; I resign myself and will wait until evening."

M. De Montmaur, with his two sons and their tutor, proceeded to the church; and, on the conclusion of High Mass, paid their visit to the *curé*. He confirmed the news which George had imparted as to the calmness of the widow, and agreed to the proposal that Mary should be brought that evening to see the mother whom she so impatiently longed to behold. In granting his permission, however, he insisted on the necessity of great prudence, as he would not risk exciting his patient by any sudden disclosures.

Mary thought that Sunday a very, very long one; but evening came at length. I will not attempt to describe the emotion of this maiden of sixteen, who was for the first time in her life to recognize her mother. As long as she could remember that mother had been dead; this knowledge that she was still living came upon her like the rolling away of a stone from a sepulchre—it was a veritable resurrection. The young girl felt that she would love with her whole heart this mother whom God had restored to her; but this separation, this high and thick wall which insanity had built between mother and child—would it be so completely overthrown that the daughter would find *all* her mother, her mother with unclouded mind, and heart free from crushing sorrow? Mary wished only to hope for the best; but as the hour of trial drew near, doubt and fear insinuated themselves into the poor child's soul. George, too, who for the past fortnight had been radiant with hope, felt less confident than ever before.

The nine o'clock bell had rung, and

already M. De Montmaur, Mary, George, Louis, Mr. Gervais, and the kindly Abbé Cervon, had installed themselves in the curtained alcove. The altar in the little chapel was decorated with more than usual richness; the flame of the sanctuary lamp seemed brighter, and the fragrance of burning incense mingled with the odor of freshly culled flowers. It was truly a spot whose peaceful, soothing influence might well react on disordered minds and troubled hearts.

Mary, on her knees, waited with inexpressible anxiety, her face pressed close to an aperture in the curtains. She watched eagerly, but every few moments was obliged to wipe away the tears that clouded her vision. She did not fancy that her excitement could possibly become greater; but as the door of the chapel opened, and the lunatics entering, passed near the alcove in going to their seats, her heart beat so violently that she imagined it must break.

"Sit down," whispered M. De Montmaur. "You are going to be ill. Come with me outside for a few moments."

"Presently," she answered. "I wish to

recognize her. There she is! That is she; is it not, George?"

"Yes."

"That one who has braided flowers in her hair, and whose face is so sweet, so gracious, yet so sorrowful?"

"Yes,"

"Ah, my God! my God!" she cried; "I am dying, but it is of joy."

Uttering these words in a low voice, Mary swooned and fell back into the arms of M. De Montmaur. She had scarcely been carried outside when she regained consciousness, and insisted on returning to the alcove. In vain they dissuaded her; she was soon on her knees again behind the curtain.

The organ was now sighing out accords inexpressibly touching and sweet. And those who listened pronounced no words: they felt that their thoughts and vows were being carried up to the throne of mercy by these strains of heavenly harmony.

Mary's eyes turned often from the altar to rest on her afflicted parent; and the widow, by some incomprehensible instinct, kept her gaze riveted on the

alcove. As the girl's eyes encountered her mother's an indescribable thrill ran through her being; and perhaps the poor crazy woman experienced a like sensation.

In the chanting of the Litany of Loretto, when the priest sang, "Comforter of the Afflicted," one voice dominated every other in responding, "Pray for us!" And, recognizing it as that of the widow, the *curé* repeated the invocation three times. As if thoroughly conscious of his design in thrice addressing their special Patroness, the insane threw all the fervor of their souls into the answers; and assuredly their "Pray for us!" could not but touch the compassionate Heart of the Mother and Queen whose aid they besought.

When the notes of the organ finally died away, at the termination of the Litany, the prayer was said, the *curé* blessed his patients, and all retired. Much to the disappointment of the party in the alcove, none of the patients sought to remain after the others. Perhaps it was as well, however, for Mary's excitement was already very great; and

had she heard her poor mother pleading with all the eloquence of woe to the Blessed Virgin for comfort in her distress, the scene might have proved too much for her agitated nerves. After some conversation with the amiable *curé*, who revived her sinking hopes as to the ultimate restoration of her mother's reason, the young girl returned to the inn, where it had been decided she was to remain for some days. The *curé* gave his permission for her to visit the hospital, but declared that she could not be seen by her mother until a propitious occasion should present itself.

Mary possessed considerable skill as a musician; and her voice, without being at all remarkable for its volume, was singularly sweet and expressive. The Abbé Cervon and the *curé* took her into Brother Hyacinth's cell on the occasion of one of her visits; and, after requesting the young religious to play a prelude and to improvise for a few moments until the patients gathered in the garden beneath his open window (it being now the middle of May, they no longer entered his room), the *curé* said to Mary:

"Now, do you take the Brother's place and sing one of the songs of your native province. Remember," he added, "that she who is nearest to the window and will hear you best is your poor mother."

"Oh, that thought will make my voice tremble, will stifle it with sobs!"

"So much the better," answered the *curé*. "What I desire is to make your mother weep; your tears may unseal the fountain where hers have been so long locked up."

Mary obeyed; her light fingers swept the ivory keyboard and elicited sounds that vibrated with deepest melancholy. Playing no special air, she blended reminiscences of old Breton refrains with the improvisation of the moment. As these passages from well-known melodies reached the widow's ear, the *curé* who, unseen, was watching her, saw the poor woman put her hand to her forehead, like one who tries to recall some confused memory. Suddenly Mary's tremulous voice blended with the notes of the piano. At this there was a lively movement of surprise through all the auditors. This was not the full, rich voice of

Brother Hyacinth: it was something softer, sweeter. One of the listeners exclaimed: "It is no longer a man, 'tis an angel that sings!"

The pastor was well pleased with the result of this first trial, and, as the days went on, had Mary frequently repeat her simple concerts. Several times some old familiar chord seemed to revive the memory of the widow, and a gleam of returning intelligence flashed from her eye as she gazed on the window through which came the flood of harmony. Once Mary, at the suggestion of George, played and sang the Breton Christmas carol which her mother had requested George to continue when he had hummed the air some weeks before. Again the air was recognized, but apparently it now brought back bitter memories; for the afflicted woman, after listening to one stanza, hurried from the window, and, seating herself on a rustic bench in a distant part of the garden, indulged in a passionate outburst of grief.

In his conversations with the Abbé Cervon and M. De Montmaur, the doctor-priest expatiated frequently on

the beneficial influence on the insane of religion, music, and poetry. He had proved the truth of his theory in several instances; and affirmed that where the patient, while sane, had possessed an ardent imagination or a poetic temperament, the chances of recovery through such influences were most favorable. From what he had observed personally, and from the account of the widow given by the Sister in charge of the female patients, he judged that Mary's mother had possessed such a temperament, and therefore, felt confident of her cure.

However, to endanger nothing by any precipation, he explained that he would defer the great test until the end of the beautiful month they were then celebrating. In France especially, perhaps, is May surrounded with all the exquisite poetry of religious devotion. During the whole month Our Lady's altars are decked with innumerable flowers and lights. Before a thousand shrines, where the treasures of art vie with those of nature in beautifying the resting-place of the Virgin's statue, young and old, the

happy and those whose tears bedew the bread they earn, assemble to pray and sing together; every morning Mass is celebrated with unusually rich vestments, and every evening the altar is ablaze with lights for Benediction.

To these prayers and canticles are joined instructions, teaching confidence in the Mother of Mercy; the pastors recount miracles that have been wrought by her—wonders that are nowhere, perhaps, so common as in France. And when, as the words "Jesus" and "Mary" are spoken by the preacher, all the white-veiled heads of women and young maidens bend and are raised again, one fancies that he is looking on a garden all planted with lilies, whose blossoms are swayed by the breath of spring, or bend beneath an angel's footsteps.

This poetry of Our Lady's cult speaks to the heart and elevates the soul; the doctor-priest knew it, and wished that the poor widow should be prepared for her return to reason by Our Lady herself. It was through the flower-strewn and perfume-laden weeks of Mary's month that he designed to lead the des-

olate mother to the child whose loss had been so long deplored.

V.

THE sunny days of the Virgin's Month sped rapidly by, and finally dawned the 31st, whose coming was fraught with so much of hope to those with whom our modest tale has to do. The doctor-priest, up with the sun, had prepared everything in the oratory of the insane for the Mass which he was to celebrate at eight o'clock. Freshly culled flowers, with the dew still sparkling in their golden calyxes, decked the altar in harmonious colors, and filled the whole apartment with a delightful aroma. Hundreds of waxen tapers burned brightly in the massive yet graceful silver candelabra, which were the special pride of the good *curé's* heart; the richest of his tabernacle veils had been hung before the earthly home of the Eucharist; and all was beauty, light, color, and fragrance.

Mary's mother, alone of the *curé's*

patients, was to be present at the Mass. For the first time her daughter was to kneel by her side, facing the altar of that God who holds intellects as well as hearts in His omnipotent hands. M. De Montmaur, his sons, Mr. Gervais and the Abbé Cervon, with the Sister who had charge of the afflicted widow, were the only others to be present ; and the Queen of the May was to be besieged with prayers as ardent as ever won her compassionating smile on human sorrows and her children's woe.

Brother Hyacinth was already at the organ. The *curé* had told him everything : had narrated the story of the Christmas night ; the cradle and baby hidden at the Turning Rock of Clisson ; the departure of the poor mother to witness her husband's death ; her travels in England and Italy ; the sad incident of Mt. St Bernard ; and then the fate of the child adopted by a noble family, and finding in them father, mother, and brothers.

"There," said the skilful priest, "now, Brother, you know the past of this poor woman whom we desire to cure. It is a

question of bringing back to her mind memories partially or completely effaced by time and misfortune. With God's grace to assist us, my words and your harmonies must dispel the clouds that envelop the past and darken the present of this poor mother. Brother Hyacinth, you too have suffered, and you remember the accords which were most effective in stirring your soul in those days when the light of your reason was eclipsed. Well, this morning let your organ breathe out those same accords. I commit this important part of my treatment to your talent and your charity."

M. De Montmaur's party entered the chapel first. Mary was robed in pure white; her luxuriant golden hair was parted on her brow in the style of Raphael's angels, and fell in unconfined, wavy ringlets over her neck and shoulders. About her throat was a blue ribbon, from which hung the little silver medal found with her in the cradle sixteen years before. Its inscription, engraved beneath the figure of Our Lady, was peculiarly appropriate for the occasion; it was "*Consolatrix Afflictorum.*"

At a sign from the *curé*, Mary arose as her mother and the Sister entered the oratory, and going to the holy-water font, dipped in her fingers and offered the holy water to her unsuspecting parent. The latter, struck with the beauty and dignity of the being who thus appeared to her, hesitated a moment before touching her fingers; then, turning to the Sister, said: "It is an angel; so it must be that God has pity on me."

"Yes," remarked the *curé*; "yes, my child: the God who healed the sick, who made the paralytics walk, the blind see, and the deaf hear, is about to end likewise all your woes."

"My woes are not in me: they are in the absence of——"

"Wherever they are, God knows well, and He is going to bring them to an end."

Here the widow shook her head as if in doubt, and the priest continued: "My daughter, do you doubt the divine goodness or power?"

"No: I believe—but——"

"Well?—but what?"

"I have faith, but I no longer have any hope."

"Not to hope in the Lord is to sin."

"Oh, don't think that I don't wish to have hope! I hunger and thirst for it, but it comes to me no more. Look! I am dried and withered like grass on which the dew no longer falls."

As she spoke the poor widow held out her arms, thin and skeleton-like. Mary was at her side, and could not help seizing one of the emaciated hands in her own.

"Oh, what a gentle touch! Ah, it is the angel!"

"No, no; I am not an angel."

"Who are you, then—you who are so beautiful and seem so good?"

"I am a daughter who is looking for her mother—for a mother who has suffered as much as you."

"As much as I? Oh, no!" And again she shook her head, as if denying the possible truth of such a statement.

"Margaret," said the *curé*, "it is not well to believe that others as well as yourself have not had their share of misfortune. Such a thought may banish charity from your heart. When we pity ourselves too much, we do not sufficiently commiserate others."

"Oh, if her mother has endured suffering such as mine, I pity her from my very soul!"

"I do not remember," said Mary, ever being embraced by my mother."

"She died, then, while you were still a baby?"

"No: she is living yet."

"Then you were stolen from her? Yes, there are those who steal children."

"No, I was not stolen from her either."

"But the tenderness of a mother for her child surpasses everything else."

"Great calamities, imperious circumstances sometimes necessitate cruel separations," said the *curé*. "Margaret, do you not believe that a woman, to save her husband, may abandon her child for a time?"

"What do you say of saving husbands? I did not save mine. No, no, I saved no one: they were all three shot in the square."

"Margaret, recall your thoughts from that blood-stained spot."

"Oh, yes: bloody, bloody!"

"Think of something else."

"When the bullet struck him, he was looking at me."

"Think no more, I beg you, of St. Brieuc!"

"Then you would have me forget the dead? Every day I pray to the good God for those who died for the King."

"Yes, yes: cherish the memory of those who are no more. But all that is dear to you is not dead. Besides your husband, you used to love some one else; did you not?"

"Ah, yes! I call God to witness that I did—God who gave me a mother's heart. I loved my daughter. The hand that gave her to me took her away."

"God is going to restore her to you."

"Why do you speak these words of hope?"

"Because you must still entertain hope. I repeat it, you offend God in giving up hope."

"The tomb does not give back to the light of day those who go down into its obscurity."

"But your daughter did not go down."

"My Father! you have not deceived

me since I came hither. Oh, do not deceive me now?"

"I speak to you before the altar of the God of truth."

"My daughter still lives?"

"Yes She was carried away on Christmas night from the Turning Rock at Clisson."

"Ah, then you know all!" cried Margaret, covering her face with her hands. "You know that I abandoned my child."

"To save its father. Margaret, God was not offended; it was your duty."

"And you are sure that I will be pardoned?"

"I am certain of it."

"What, my isolation will end?"

"Yes."

"I shall see my little Mary again?"

"Yes: you will see her, with her sixteen years, her grace and her piety."

"And when do you promise to give me so much happiness?"

"If I had thought you strong enough, I would have already given it to you."

"Oh, I am strong! See, I have withstood sixteen long, long years of misfortune, of tears and anguish and woe."

"Are you strong enough to bear up under joy and happiness?"

"Joy, happiness—I no longer know what it is. In heaven it is to see God; here below it ought to be to recover and to embrace one's daughter."

"Embrace your daughter, then!" cried Mary, arising from her *prie-dieu*, and throwing her arms about her mother's neck; "embrace the child for whom you have grieved so long, and who brings to you all her love!"

"But this is not my little Mary: it is still the angel."

"Mother dear, look at me. See this medal which you fastened to my neck in that cruel long ago."

"Yes, that is true—I remember now. Yes, I dedicated my daughter to the Blessed Virgin."

"And she has always watched over me, mother; and to-day it is in this chapel consecrated to her, before this altar of the Comforter of the Afflicted, that I am restored to you, and that I bring to you those who found me in my cradle."

"Oh, you who speak to me with so sweet a voice—you whom I took for an

angel, for one of the cherubim of heaven—you are, then, really and truly my child?"

"Mother, does not your own heart plead for me, and tell you that I am?"

"It tells me that if you are deceiving me, it will break in despair."

"But you are not being deceived. Everyone here loves you; and my caresses, my kisses, my tears of joy that bathe your cheeks and hands, should convince you that I am Mary, your daughter, lost to you for so many years."

"But who could have saved you?—for now I remember it was very cold that night when I carried you to the Turning Rock. I wrapped you up as warmly as I could, but the chill breeze must have penetrated to your delicate frame and caused you much suffering. It might have killed you. But, alas! I had to go to your father, and it was impossible to take you with me. How could you resist the bitter cold—a child so fragile as you were?"

"Dear mother, you placed me in the care of God and of the Mother of the afflicted, and they sent to the Turning

Rock these friends whom you see here. They found me in my cradle among the ferns, and took me to their home."

"Where are they?"

"Here, mother," said Mary, indicating the father and his sons.

"Well, may God reward them and pour down upon them all possible happiness!" she prayed, with great earnestness.

As she pronounced these words, Madame Margaret raised her arms as if to bless the De Montmaurs; but suddenly her body stiffened, her eyes closed, and she fell backward into the arm-chair that had been placed near her *prie dieu*. The *curé* was at her side in an instant. After placing his hand on her heart, he said: "The beating is rapid, but not too precipitate. This crisis was inevitable: it is the transition from misery to happiness. Let us pray for her silently; and when she regains consciousness, do you, Mary, clasp her in your arms. During this species of sleep, I cherish the hope that her memory and reason will disentangle themselves from all confusing elements, and that when next she re-

vives the dark clouds of insanity shall have rolled away from her mind forever."

All knelt and prayed fervently, and the tones of the organ blended with their earnest petitions. We have spoken of the expression, the soul, which characterized the playing of Brother Hyacinth; but never did he so faithfully interpret the varying emotions of the human heart as now. The history of the poor widow, which the doctor-priest had told him, stirred all the sympathies of his artist-soul; and he had been longing for the moment when he might be allowed to test the power of his beloved art over the temperament of the unfortunate mother. When the *curé* signed to him to play, it was as if the noble instrument became a part of himself, and the weird melodies which soothed him in the days of his own insanity awoke again, with a pathos inexpressibly touching. Each note was a prayer that lifted his hearers to the Father's throne; and on the heart of the semi-unconscious patient the harmony fell like vivifying raindrops on thirsty flowers.

He had been playing about a quarter of an hour, when the widow, whose hands had been clasped as if in death, raised one of them to her forehead, then placed it on her heart. She gasped as though smothering beneath an insupportable weight for a few moments, her bosom heaved violently; then the tears came, and, raising herself a little, she cried out loudly:

"Where is she? where is she—the daughter whom God has given me back?"

"In your arms, dear mother!" cried Mary, throwing herself on her bosom and covering her face with kisses.

Ah, then it was evident that Margaret had recovered her motherly love! No longer doubting the reality of her joy, she clasped her daughter again and again to her heart, fondled, caressed, and kissed her; showed herself altogether the mother finding and embracing her lost child.

It were useless to attempt a description of the happiness that followed this cure. Of the countless acts of thanksgiving that were wafted from earth to the

Virgin's throne on that last morning of May, none surpassed in fervor and intensity of gratitude those poured forth by these two favored clients of our Heavenly Mother, who, side by side, heard the *curé's* Mass. To make assurance doubly certain, M. De Montmaur decided that they should all remain in the village a month longer. But there was no relapse. The doctor-priest had taken time to prepare his patient for the great ordeal; but once it was safely over, he answered for the permanence of her sanity.

So mother and daughter, father and sons and tutor, all went home to Bretagne. The Abbé Cervon returned to his cathedral, with additional cause for extolling the charity and skill of his friend the *curé*. And the *curé* himself thanked God for the good which he had been permitted to accomplish.

Before the return of the Virgin's Month, however, both the *curé* and Abbé Cervon paid a visit to Bretagne. M. De Montmaur, in inviting them, had written to the *curé*.

"You have restored her reason to

Margaret: come now and make her daughter and my son George happy by blessing their union. Tell the good Abbé who led us to you, and who witnessed our anxieties, our prayers and tears, to come also, that he may witness our joy and happiness."

Shortly after the receipt of this letter George and Mary were married in the Chapel of All Joys, near Clisson; and immediately after the ceremony the whole wedding-party proceeded to the Turning Rock. George laughed at the boyish credulity, to banish which his father had led him to it so many years before; but declared that it had proved to him the most fortunate superstition ever entertained by mortal.

It only remains to be told that the most massive silver lamp to be procured in Paris was duly forwarded to the Hospice of St. Bernard. And if you ever visit the chapel there, and ask the sacristan who gave that costly *ex-voto*, you will probably hear a repetition of "A Tale the Bretons Tell."

THE MADONNA OF THE EMERALD.

One afternoon some five hundred years ago the mayor of Fiesole was taking a walk round his city, enjoying the magnificent view which it affords of the valley of the Arno and Florence the Proud. In the course of his walk he came to the convent of the Friars Preachers, which, being a recent foundation, was not yet definitely enclosed. The mayor observed that the sons of St. Dominic had exquisite roses and other flowers of great beauty in their garden; these were due to the devotedness of Fra Semplice, who in obedience to the prior spent his time in taking care of the plants.

Semplice was a humble, simple soul. If a venial sin ever tarnished his baptismal robe, it might be one of pride in gaz-

ing on the perfumed brilliancy of his flowers. During Benediction and the processions of the Blessed Sacrament, when his eyes fell on the exquisite roses that bloomed around the tabernacle, or shed their leaves like a purple carpet under the dazzling rays of the remonstrance, it cost him an effort to suppress a feeling of paternal vanity, and the fancy that the Madonna looked with affectionate complacency on the scented wreaths he laid at Her feet.

This good Brother shared the enthusiastic admiration the whole of Tuscany bestowed on the inimitable frescoes with which a young monk called Fra Giovanni had decorated the ceilings and walls of the chapel and cloister; yet poor Semplice believed, in the simplicity of his heart, that his roses were a purer and more acceptable homage to the Creator than the works of genius of the great master. But if he could have guessed the thoughts of the mayor as the latter loitered round the garden, feasting his senses on the lovely children of nature, the offspring of the good Brother's care, he would have felt a pang of sorrow.

"What a transformation in this hill!" murmured the mayor; "it used to be full of briers and stones: the town never turned it to account, and I myself allowed the Fathers to take possession of it, and metamorphose it in this manner. Could I only have foreseen this, I would have exacted from them a thousand gold crowns, which would be extremely useful to us now, as we shall have to pay sixty Roman crowns for the picture of the Madonna to be placed over the high altar of the cathedral. Methinks it is not yet too late. I have made no legal surrender of this municipal property, and should be acting only as a prudent administrator of the township if I demanded a certain sum from the good Fathers before formally conveying to them all rights over it."

These thoughts occupied the mind of the mayor during his return home, and for the rest of the evening. However, before broaching the subject to the town council, he thought it advisable to confer with the prior of the convent, and come to some agreement. Early next morning, therefore, he hastened to the convent to set forth his views.

The exorbitant demand fell like a thunderbolt on the prior, who was far from being worldly wise; he readily admitted the rights of the town of Fiesole, but reminded the functionary that when the friars came to the place, it was totally uncultivated—in fact, a desert; and that the silence of the authorities had led them to believe in an unconditional transfer of the land. In conclusion he said, humbly: "If it please God and your lordship to deprive us of our monastery, we shall bow beneath the rod that strikes. You know we are mendicants by vow and profession, and that our Father, St. Dominic, forebade hoarding money. We possess nothing; if you drive us from this place, our building will remain unfinished, and we will go and plant out tent wherever God wills."

"O Father! I never contemplated your leaving Fiesole, where we all respect and love you. Nevertheless, your paternity must desire to have the ownership of the land conveyed to you by a legal act; the municipal finances do not allow us to make it over to you by an

absolute donation; let us try to come to an understanding."

Finally an agreement was effected, and the first person informed of the contract was Fra Giovanni, whom the prior called from his scaffold in the chapter-room, telling him to suspend his work there.

"Brother, the gift with which God has endowed you is going to be the means of saving our community. The township of Fiesole requests a large picture of our Blessed Lady. Set to work at it with your whole soul; we are to present it as an altar-piece to the cathedral, and in exchange the town will make over to us the land on which our monastery stands, and which does not belong to us as yet by legal right. Will you require a model?"

"The model is there above," whispered Giovanni, as he raised his eyes towards heaven.

"Very well; begin at once. Fra Semplice will be always near, to mix your colors, and give you every help in his power."

The young monk bowed in acquiescence, and shut himself up, with his fellow-laborer, in his humble studio. Both

knelt and prayed fervently; gradually the ardent faith of the artist illuminated his imagination, and the ideal of the Virgin Mother seemed to stand before his easel. He seized his palette and brushes, and imparted to his composition the delicate grace and tender mysticism with which his heart overflowed; there was nothing earthly in the beautiful figure which he drew, on his knees, as was his wont; following his pure ideal, the offspring of his faith, he copied the Madonna he seemed to gaze upon, and She in turn appeared to smile upon him from Her starry nimbus.

Fra Semplice, while preparing the ruby color for the tunic and the azure for the mantle, was struck with awe before the canvas, which every day grew more beautiful, and felt himself overpowered by a supernatural veneration, as if in presence of a real apparition of our Blessed Lady; and when, towards evening, he slipped away to water his beloved roses, he thus replied to the Brothers who questioned him about the picture: Angelico, Angelico! It is an angel that paints."

When Fra Giovanni had accomplished his task the monks and the mayor of Fiesole were summoned to the studio; words of enthusiasm burst from them all, as they involuntarily fell on their knees and shouted with one voice: "*Ave Maria! Ave Maria!*" The word of Fra Semplice seemed the fitting expression of the general admiration, and they all proclaimed the artist Angelico. So also did the mayor, who ordered the painting to be conveyed to the cathedral on the following day.

The clergy, the municipal body, and the people of Fiesole came in procession to bear away the picture of the Madonna. Semplice, radiant with joy, opened the door of the chapter-room, where the masterpiece had been reverently placed. A shout of admiration, followed by one of indignation, burst from the crowd: a reckless hand had pierced the canvas, and placed in the hand of the Virgin a beautiful rose heavy with the pearly drops of the morning dew. It was Fra Semplice's innocent present to his loved Madonna before bidding Her adieu. In Italy even the common

people have artistic taste, and, in spite of the sanctity of the place, they were not sparing of denunciations, and might, perhaps, have laid violent hands on poor Semplice if Fra Giovanni had not stood before him, and shielded him with his white robes. At the sight of the painter Semplice was forgotten, and a loud cry broke forth from every throat: "Angelico! Angelico!" The mayor took from his finger an emerald of great price —the gift of his neighbor Cosmo di Medici,—and placed it where the stem of Brother Semplice's rose had made a rent in the canvas; and the picture was henceforth called the Madonna of the Emerald.

The artist-monk ever after retained the sweet name of Fra Angelico—in Florence, in Venice, in Orvieto, and finally in Rome, whither Nicholas V. called him to adorn the Vatican Chapel. He died in the Eternal City, and is buried in the Church of the Minerva, where a simple stone marks his place of rest. He remained humble to the end, refusing the mitre and even the cardinal's hat.

A MIDNIGHT PENITENT.

THE Feast of the Divine Maternity was over; the Spouse of Christ had sung her song of joy and thankfulness, and Peace with her drowsy sister Sleep had descended upon earth. It was past midnight in a flourishing, manufacturing city in one of the New England States, when a priest was roused from slumber by an incessant knocking at his front door. Opening his window, which was directly overhead, he discerned a man well advanced in years, and asked him what his errand was at that late hour.

"Open, Father! open!" was the reply.

"But what do you wish?—who are you?'

"I am everything that is vile and bad. But, oh, open, open quickly! I want to go to confession."

Naturally the good priest thought the man had been drinking, and was about to bid him be off, when he remembered St. Philip Neri's remark—that his "most consoling conversions were made in the most unseasonable hours,"—and so he decided to admit this strange visitor, and see, with God's grace, what could be done for him. Half in doubt and half in hope, therefore, be descended and threw wide the door. Scarcely had the importunate caller crossed the threshold, when he fell upon his knees and cried: "O Father! you see in me a most abandoned wretch —a villain given up to all manner of crime. For months I have not seen the inside of a church; *for twenty years I have not been to confession.* In all that time there is hardly a sin which the enemy of souls could suggest that I have not committed. I have been a—everything, I believe, except a murderer. In this very hour I was on an errand of sin *when my dead mother appeared to me and said, 'Go at once to confession.'*"

The man was not drunk: he had not even been drinking; excited he certainly was; and no wonder. The priest con-

ducted him to a private room, and there with tears streaming down his cheeks, and every other sign of deep contrition, the penitent unburthened his soul.

When absolution had been given, the priest said to him: "My friend, your conversion is as marvellous as it is consoling; how do you account for it? What good deed have you ever done in our Saviour's name?"

"Father," the penitent replied: "I can explain the grace which I have received only in this way: on her deathbed my dear mother made me—then but a lad of twenty—promise to say the beads every day. Wicked as I have been, I have kept that promise faithfully—even when farthest on the road to perdition."

The mystery was explained, and the priest breathed an ejaculation of gratitude to the Refuge of Sinners, the Queen of the Holy Rosary.

Again promising with God's help to make all possible atonement for the evils of the past, and to conform his future life to the precepts of Holy Mother Church, the midnight penitent departed.

This is no uncertain legend, wafted down to us on the breezes of Time from the shadowy days of old : but a brief and simple narrative of what occurred but a few days ago in wide-awake America—"a plain, unvarnished tale," which was related to me only last night by a brother priest, who was the instrument of Our Lady's goodness.

THE MIRACLE OF METZ.*

ANNE DE CLÉRY, the subject of the extraordinary cure about to be recorded, was at School in the Convent of the Sacred Heart, at Metz, in the year 1855. She was then thirteen years of age, and her health and spirits good. Previously she had lived two years in Africa, where her father occupied the post of Notary-General to the Imperial Court at Algiers. Madame de Cléry's health having suffered from the climate, she returned to Metz with her two daughters, the younger of whom—Anne—was very uneasy about her mother's health, and prayed fervently for her recovery, offering herself to suf-

* The account here given is from a small tractate published under this title, with the *imprimatur* of the Bishop of Metz.

fer the pains of sickness in her stead. The sacrifice was accepted.

Anne's illness, which was of a very distressing nature, commenced in the Holy Week of 1856, and continued steadily to increase, in spite of the prescriptions of the first physicians at Metz, Aix in Savoy, and Paris. Remedies of every possible kind—some of them of a terribly severe character—were tried, but without the smallest result, except to increase the sufferings of the poor patient. The Paris physician, at length (in the year 1857), pronounced her case to be incurable. He said: "Mlle. Anne is laboring under the disease known by the name of 'muscular and atrophical paralysis.' I very much apprehend that no remedies can touch the disease."

The sufferings of the poor girl were continuous and severe. Her limbs were deprived of power and strength; they shrunk and contracted, and the muscles under each knee produced a sort of knot, which no power on earth could untie. She would be, as far as man could foresee, a cripple as long as she lived. Anne de Cléry was, however, resigned to the

will of God, and supported her heavy trial by a deep piety and constant prayer. At times her faith suggested the possibility of a miraculous cure, but she scarcely hoped or wished for such an extraordinary favor. She had a particular devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, and every week a priest brought her Holy Communion, which was her greatest support and consolation.

She employed her time, when able (though in the recumbent position, and unable to lift her head), in embroidering altar cloths, and making artificial flowers for the adornment of the sanctuary. It was while thus preparing for the devotion known as the Forty Hours, in the Parochial Church of St. Martin at Metz, in the year 1865, that the thought sometimes crossed her mind that she might be cured by the Blessed Sacrament; but she was slow to encourage an idea which might be an illusion, and deprive her of her resignation and peace of mind.

The devotion above mentioned was to take place on the 12th, 13th, and 14th of June. On the first two days it was impossible to carry her to the church

(whither she had not been taken for a long while), her pains were so severe; but on the third day, with the greatest difficulty, and at the cost of much suffering, after having received Communion, she was carried to the church by her maid Clémentine, who sat on a bench, and held her on her knees. Madame de Cléry and Mlle. de Coetlosquet knelt close beside her; but neither the patient nor her friends were expecting the extraordinary event about to follow.

After a few moments' rest Anne became absorbed in devotion, and prayed, as she had often done at the moment of Communion: "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst cure me." At the same instant she felt so violent a pain in her whole body, that it was all she could do not to scream out. She prayed for strength to bear it, and resigned herself to God's will. Then she says, she felt filled with faith and hope, and became conscious that she was cured. Anne threw herself immediately upon her knees, and said to her companions, "Pray, pray! I am cured!" Madame de Cléry, overcome with emotion, in a state of bewilderment, led her daughter

out of the church, scarcely believing the evidence of her senses when she saw her standing alone, and able to walk. She ascertained that the knots under her daughter's knees had entirely disappeared; and then Anne returned to the church, where she remained kneeling in praise and thanksgiving before the Blessed Sacrament for three-quarters of an hour, without feeling the least fatigue.

Her cure was complete; all the ailments that had afflicted her disappeared, leaving behind no trace of illness. Eleven days after her cure, Anne walked through the streets of Metz in a procession of the Blessed Sacrament (which lasted an hour and a quarter), to the astonishment and admiration of all who had known her former sad condition. Her physician, when he saw her rise and walk to meet him, said; "Mademoiselle, what men could not effect, God has done."

AN EXTRAORDINARY ANSWER TO PRAYER.

THE popular sentiment in Turin is that the late lamented Don Bosco performed miracles; our Holy Mother the Church will probably pronounce, later, on the character of the marvellous events in the life of the servant of God. One extraordinary answer to prayer, of which there are many living witnesses, is too remarkable to be left unrecorded. The incident occurred in 1877.

Giuseppa Loughi was then ten years old. She had been paralyzed for several years in consequence of violent convulsions; her right arm was inert, she could not stand erect, and had lost the power of speech. Her mental faculties seemed also impaired, and all the remedies prescibed by physicians were

unavailing. Her pious mother had recourse to Mary, Help of Christians. On the 23d of May, the eve of the feast on which Holy Church invokes Our Lady under this sweet title, the poor woman carried her afflicted child to the shrine of the Valdocco to implore a hitherto hopeless cure. She then went to Don Bosco, that he might read over the invalid the blessing of Our Lady Help of Christians. On that evening the abode of the sainted priest was thronged with visitors, who were all melted to compassion at the sight of the unfortunate child. Her sufferings were pitiable: she could neither stand nor sit and, in spite of her mother's vigilant eye, every moment she fell to one side or the other. On seeing the crowd that preceded her, and considering her daughter's condition, the mother thought she could not wait her turn, and was preparing to leave with a heavy heart, when those present, forgetting their own necessities, offered to let her pass in before them.

The one to first propose this kind act was a gentleman belonging to a noble

family of Piedmont, an active promoter of every good work in Turin; he was president of the Conference of St. Vincent de Paul and was invested with all the dignities his fellow citizens could bestow. He had pondered a noble resolve in his heart; but, mistrustful of his merits, and considering his age, he still hesitated to answer what he thought must be God's call. This call was to enter the Salesian Congregation. Several times he had come to Don Bosco for advice, laying before him what he considered his vocation, and begging for his prayers; the holy man would give no decisive answer, waiting for God to manifest His will. On this day Count Cays de Giletta had come to insist anew, and obtain a final answer. When the stricken child entered Don Bosco's room, he said to himself; "If she come out cured, I will enter the congregation; I will take it as a sign of God's will—my hesitation will be at an end."

Giuseppa was carried before Don Bosco, and laid upon a sofa; her mother explained her complicated ailments. The saintly priest exhorted the poor woman

to confidence in Mary's tender mercy, and told her to kneel down while he pronounced on the little invalid the blessing of Mary *Auxilium Christianorum.* He then commanded the child to make the Sign of the Cross; she was about to obey with her left hand, but Don Bosco quickly interposed: "No, not the left hand, child; you must use your right hand."

"Her right hand is paralyzed," observed the mother.

"Let us see if it is." And he repeated his injunction to the little girl. She then lifted her paralyzed arm, raised her hand to her forehead, then to her chest, and to her left and right shoulders.

"Bravo!" exclaimed Don Bosco: "you have made the Sign of the Cross well; but you have not said the words. Now repeat the sign, and pronounce the words as I do myself—In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen."

The child, who had been dumb for more than a month, found her tongue loosed: she repeated the sign and pronounced the words; then in an ecstasy

of joy she exclaimed: "O mother! the Blessed Virgin has cured me."

On hearing these words, the overjoyed mother could only weep.

"Now that the good Virgin has cured you," continued Don Bosco, "make haste to thank Her, and recite from the bottom of your heart an *Ave Maria.*"

Giuseppa recited the prayer very devoutly, in a distinct voice; however, this was not enough; it was yet to be seen if she could stand and walk. He told her to walk round the room; she did so several times, with a firm step. In fact, the cure was complete and perfect. The little girl, unable any longer to contain her exuberant gratitude, rushed to the door, and, throwing it open, showed herself to the people, who a few minutes before had beheld her a cripple.

"Thank the Madonna with me, *signore;* Her mercy has cured me. See, I can move my hand; I can walk, I suffer no pain."

This spectacle, and the words accompanying it, caused an indescribable emotion in all present; they gathered round the favored child—the *miracolata,* as they

called her,—some weeping, others praying aloud, and giving glory to God. Don Bosco himself was overcome with emotion, and trembled from head to foot. The mother and child soon took their departure, to return thanks at the shrine of their Benefactress.

The good Count now thought within himself, "Evidently the Blessed Virgin wishes me to become a Salesian." Without delay he entered the novitiate, and set himself with ardor to the practice of poverty, humility, and mortification as prescribed in the rules of the institute. After the lapse of a certain time, however, his former scruples regarding his vocation returned. He began to doubt if he was doing God's will. Don Bosco, who had been so cautious about deciding on his vocation, now strenuously encouraged the troubled novice to persevere, recognizing in these scruples the effects of Satan against a generous soul. The novice, disheartened by interior aridity and violent temptations, found it difficult to believe in the discernment of his spiritual Father; he knew that he had asked as a sign, the cure of Giuseppa; but per-

haps, suggested the evil spirit, the cure was not a permanent one. Then again the novice would reproach himself with credulity and pride in imagining that God had sent him a particular mark as an assurance of his vocation.

One morning, as the heavy-hearted religious was crossing the sacristy of the Salesian church, he met a young girl, with her parents, coming to make an offering. Approaching him, she said: "Don't you know me, *signor?*"

"Are you Giuseppa Loughi?" exclaimed the novice, thrilled with joy at this unexpected answer to his doubts; "has the cure lasted?"

"I am in perfect health; I can speak, I can walk, I can write, I can study and work as if I had never been ill a day."

"Look at her," added the mother; "see her rosy cheeks; she eats with a good appetite, I assure you. Our neighbors all agree with us that her recovery was a real miracle."

The Count felt himself pervaded by a supernatural peace; his trial was at an end; his resolution to persevere in the Salesian Congregation never again wa-

vered, and for the remainder of his life he edified the community by his many Christian and religious virtues, the most conspicuous of which were his humility and generosity in serving God.

THE LEGEND OF THE GHOSTLY MASS.

It was the 1st of November. After the solemnities of the Feast of All Saints were over, the worshippers hurried homeward, eager to regain their fireside, and seek shelter against the threatening storm, which seemed the hasty precursor of the approaching commemoration of All Souls; an icy wind scattered afar the yellow leaves that strewed the ground,—last relics of spring time; while a universal sadness seemed to pervade Nature, and prepare the soul for the melancholy services of the morrow.

But the feelings of depression which the evening inspired were increased tenfold by a contemplation of the ruins of the ancient abbey, with its broken arches, its deserted cloister, and its abandoned

cemetery. Once thousands of monks had chanted therein, day and night, the praises of God; there mitred abbots, learned and holy men, had presided at the glorious and touching ceremonies of the Church,—there were naught now remained save the remnants of the abbey church and a bell-tower, the shadow of which still fell over the ancient burial-ground of the monks. The neighboring peasants came, occasionally, to pray at the foot of the cross in the neglected cemetery; while in the belfry a silvery-toned bell, which had escaped the notice of the ruthless plunderers of the Revolution, still rang forth the call to God's service; for the poor little village church, scarcely recovered from the national disasters, possessed neither belfry nor bell.

Maclou, the bell-ringer and sacristan of the humble church, which was too poor to give him any salary for his double functions, had laid out the black vestments for the commemoration of the dead, and had brought into operation all the resources of his long experience and of his zealous devotion towards the souls of the faithful departed; he ranged the

waxen torches round the empty catafalque, surveyed his preparations with a satisfied air, and set out for the belfry of the cemetery, to toll the knell of the parting day. The old bell of the monks vibrated and rang forth, as in centuries gone by, to the country round: "Pray, pray for the departed!" And at every fireside each one made the Sign of the Cross, and responded to the sound of the bell with a *De profundis*. That evening neither laughter nor song was heard throughout the village, since there was no household without the memory of some place left vacant by the fell reaper, Death.

Night reigned in utter darkness over the abbey ruins; all was silent, and the triple covering of moss woven by time over the sepulchral slabs deadened even the steps of an old man walking slowly among them. He was the aged priest who acted as pastor of the church,—a living wreck escaped from the persecution. He remembered the closing days of the monastery wherein he had been a novice, and where he was now sole guardian of its ruins. He had preserved un-

dimmed the ardor of eternal youth, daily renewed at the altar; the people knew him as "the Saint," and it was declared that sometimes, when at prayer, his forehead shone brilliantly.

At the toll of the knell the monk had recited the Penitential Psalms; then, drawn by some mysterious attraction, heedless of the intense cold, he had come thither amid the ruins, to pray for those who had formerly been his brethren in religion. Kneeling before the remains of the altar, he invoked the efficacy of the countless Masses celebrated upon those crumbling slabs of marble, and prayed long and fervently for the deceased religious buried beneath the pavement, who had none that would remember them.

The hours glided by; gradually the last fires were extinguished, the hearth stones grew cold, slumber had closed all eyes, yet Maclou, the bell-ringer, continued still to toll.

"Toll, toll, Maclou!" whispered an interior voice; "the longer you ring the bell, the more prayers will be said for the dead."

But Maclou answered to himself; "What use is it? All are asleep."

"Who knows," continued the voice, "but some one may possibly awake during the night to pray for the departed? Toll, toll on!"

"I will; my bell is *my* prayer."

And Maclou resumed his task. And the longer he tolled, standing beneath the ancient porch, the more energy he felt; a kind of supernatural strength seemed to animate him; he experienced not the slightest fatigue; and, calling to mind the many dead whom he had accompanied to the cemetery, the harmonious rhythm of his bell, like the sough of the waves on a sandy beach, transformed his ideas into revery.

'My turn will come," he said, slowly; "I am over sixty. Lord, grant that I be prepared when my hour draws near!" And his head drooped upon his breast, his limbs bent under him; he sank upon the ground; the rope slipped from his fingers, and the last tones of the knell died away in the fog.

Meanwhile at the foot of the altar the priest knelt in an ecstasy of prayer: he

was lost to all sounds of earth, and, not perceiving that the death-knell had ceased, continued his fervent supplications. The clock rang out midnight; All Souls' Day was ushered in, and at the last stroke of the hour a mysterious breath passed over the cemetery, similar to that which astonished the Prophet Ezekiel. A strange noise issued from those silent tombs. The dark plain undulated like the ocean when swollen by a tempest; the willows wept, the cypresses moaned, and the yews shook their branches, as if in agonies of grief. There was a rustling of winding-sheets, an indefinable crashing, as of breaking boughs. Soon a spectre emerged from the tombs, then another, still another, then ten, twenty, a hundred at once. These phantoms came forth from the cemetery, from the cloister, from the pavement of the sanctuary,—all wearing the monastic habit; there were likewise the benefactors of the convent in their worldly attire, and some choir-boys clothed in white surplices. All gradually penetrated into the nave (which grew sufficiently spacious to contain them), and found places in the stalls,

in the choir, and around the broken columns.

The aged priest prayed on; strange to say, the awesome spectacle had no terrors for him; he understood that under these sensible forms the departed members of his monastery solicited suffrages. One of the spectres bore the abbatial mitre and crosier, and, advancing toward the kneeling figure, said, authoritatively: "Living priest of the Living God, in the Name of Our Lord Jesus Christ take these vestments and this chalice, and offer at the altar the Holy Sacrifice for the dead who surround you."

The altar was prepared, the tapers lighted, and the vestments laid in order. A thrill of joy pervaded the assembly when the monk, obedient as of old, approached the altar; but when he began, "*Introibo ad altare Dei*," no one present could answer him; the Sacrifice of the living may not be served by the dead. "*Introibo ad altare Dei*," repeated the priest, still louder; yet no voice broke the silence. Anxiety now took possession of the assemblage, and lamentations resounded on every side; the Sacrifice ac-

corded them could not be accomplished.

Maclou slept on—the steps of the dead do not awake the living; he had heard naught of that terrible thrill which had accompanied the entrance of so many spirits. But when the priest repeated for the third time, yet more loudly, "*Introibo ad altare Dei*," Maclou awoke; he perceived the church filled, the priest alone at the altar, and, without further thought, understood that his pastor needed his services, and in a loud voice he answered, as usual: "*Ad Deum, qui lætificat juventutem meam.*" And, making his way towards the altar, he knelt to serve a Mass such as he had never before witnessed.

At the *Dies Iræ* strange voices sounded forth unknown canticles; an organ, touched by an unearthly hand, gave out terrible tones, as of thunder; the granite arches of the vaulted roof, and the columns beneath the cross-springers, vibrated in unison, like the chords of a harp; it was a concert of the unseen world. Silence followed; the consecrated Host was slowly elevated, then the chalice,

and all bowed in adoration; when the heads were raised a smile played over the sad faces, and angels appeared, who marked each with the Blood of the chalice. Ere long the priest, turning towards the people, pronounced: "*Requiescant in pace.*"

"*Amen,*" repeated Maclou, and forthwith the vision disappeared; the candles were extinguished on the altar; the tombs were silent, and in the depths of the sky the souls were seen rising upward like radiant stars. "*Et vidimus gloriam ejus, plenum gratiæ et veritatis.*" And myriad voices responded with exultation, "*Deo gratias.*"

No one remained save the abbot, who had ordered the monk to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice. Approaching with an air of majestic dignity, he blessed the celebrant, and, turning to Maclou, said: "My son, you have powerfully aided us by serving this Mass, wherein the God of Mercy has graciously deigned to concentrate all the merit of numberless functions; and in recompense of your charity the Lord permits me to bear you to heaven." And with his icy hand, colder

than mountain snow, the abbot signed the Cross on his forehead.

"And will you not also take me to the Promised Land?" asked the celebrant.

"No: your hour is not yet come; you must still open heaven to others of our brethren, who cannot now join us; and you must increase otherwise the number of those that will welcome you on high."

The next morning the peasants, summoned by their saintly parish priest, came to bear off old Maclou, who had expired while sounding the knell during the eve of All Souls'. The Office for the Dead was duly recited, and under the catafalque which he had raised and ornamented with his own hands on the day previous, the body of the aged sacristan rested in peace; his soul was already in the abode of the blessed. Later, on the spot where Maclou had breathed his last, the old priest succeeded in raising a humble chapel, dedicated to the Souls in Purgatory, where he daily said Mass for the dead, especially for his brethren in the adjoining cemetery who yet awaited deliverance.

Finally, after persevering for some

time in his pious practice, and in his efforts to extend devotion to the Holy Souls, he became dangerously ill, and on the evening of the following Festival of All Saints lay in his agony. The faithful began the prayers for the dying; towards midnight he was believed to be peacefully expiring, and they began the prayer for the recommendation of the soul. "*Subvegite, Sancti Dei; occurrite angeli.*" And the saints undoubtedly obeyed the invocation; for the dying man once more opened his eyes to a sight which shed indescribable joy over his features, already glazed in death.

"What is it?—what do you see?" asked those present. And the dying saint, in an ecstasy that arrested death, said: "It is the 'Mass of the Ghosts!' Oh! how beautiful, amid the ruins of the abbey! I had gone thither to pray for my brethren." Then, in clear and distinct accents, he related the incident given above, adding, "The server was Maclou, the bell-ringer, who was tolling the knell for the dead, and who was permitted to join their blessed train. It is now my turn." So saying, he expired;

his soul went, without doubt, to swell the assembly of the saints in heaven, who owed their speedy deliverance to his charitable prayers; while amid the darkness of the night an invisible hand tolled the bell of the ruined monastery, ringing forth a strange, strange knell, so that all remarked: "The bell tolls as only Maclou knew how to ring it—sadly yet joyously."

BARRY'S CHRISTMAS GIFT.

I.

THE joys of the gladsome Christmas-tide were brightening many homes in many lands on the night of December 24, 1820. Lights shone from the windows, and lightened the darkness without. Over the mountain of Great St. Bernard in the Pennine Alps the night was settling down, dark and stormy. The thermometer registered 2° below zero; in some places on the perilous Pass the snow, already five feet deep, was deepening as the night advanced. This Pass of Mons Jovis, through which marched the Romans, Charlemagne, and Frederick Barbarossa, and along which, in 1800, Napoleon led his army of 30,000 men, is still the dread of travellers. Like a

dragon of old it waits and watches for its victims. Its giddy precipices yawn and its beetling rocks frown on the hardihood of those who brave its terrors.

Far up the mountain, nearly 8,000 feet above the sea level, stands the Hospice of St. Bernard. Here live those noble men, the monks of St. Augustine, who, enduring hardship and want, sacrifice their lives to rescue from death the victims of Mons Jovis Pass. When heavy fogs come or blinding snows the Brothers set forth with their brave dogs to search for lost travellers. They visit the huts erected here and there as places of refuge; or the swift-footed, keen-nosed beasts, going where their master cannot follow, discover many a wanderer. It may be he is nearly buried in some drift; it may be he lies on the brink of some frightful precipice; it matters not: if he still lives, dogs and masters would give their lives to save his.

The grim-looking hospice, with its dark stone walls, tells little of the kindness and charity within. Its ample dimensions, spacious enough to accommodate five hundred persons, are outspread on

the shore of an ice-bound lake. On this wild December night cheering beams of light penetrated the darkness from the shutterless windows of the building, and the snow-flakes scintillated as they crossed the radiant paths.

In *this* house no scene of mirth and merriment celebrated the night when Our Lord was born. The dark walls of the refectory were lighted by the blaze from the roaring fire; the tables were drawn aside, and straw strewn on the floor; everywhere was movement and bustle, as the Brothers prepared to set forth on their charitable mission.

One of the monks took no part in the preparations. He sat on a bench by the chimney, reading of that time

> "In the winter wild
> While the heaven-born Child,
> All meanly wrapped, in the rude manger lies.
> Nature in awe of Him
> Had doffed her gaudy trim,
> With her great Master so to sympathize."

On such a night as this, a month before the reader with one of the dogs, had rescued and carried to the hospice a

young man overtaken by the storm. Brother Francis had never recovered from the exposure and fatigue. The young man, through the care bestowed upon him by the monks, was soon enabled to go on his way rejoicing, but his rescuer was now waiting a greater deliverer from his pain. He said little; he only sat by the chimney reading his book, or gazing into the fire with wistful eyes. But he was always ready with a smile for others, and a word of encouragement, often as effectual as more practical help. He laid his book down now, to watch with a gentle smile the busy picture around him.

The dogs were showing great signs of great impatience, whining and running to the door, barely standing long enough for the monks to fasten upon them the flasks whose contents were to revive some perishing wanderer. One large, fine-looking dog, with a noble, patient face, was standing a little apart from his companions, and, unlike them, quietly waiting the departure. He comprehended that any delay was for the best, and that the impatience of the other dogs retarded

the preparations. His bright eyes wistfully followed the Brothers' movements, and now and then his eagerness did overcome, a little, his self-command, so that he started forward with a remonstrating whine, but always checked himself, and resumed his old position. Finally he gravely stalked across the hall, and thrust his cold nose into Brother Francis' hand, mutely asking why he was not going with them as of old. This dog was Barry, the noblest St. Bernard that has ever lived a life of canine self-devotion, through whose instrumentality not less than forty persons have been saved.

At last the preparations were complete; the dogs, knowing what was expected of them, stood motionless by the door while the Father supplicated that they might all be defended from "the perils and dangers of this night, for the love of our Saviour Jesus Christ." A deep "Amen" sounded through the hall. There was a brief pause, while all still knelt, well knowing that they might never again perform the impressive little service; then the doors were opened, the dogs rushed out, the monks followed,

and Brother Francis was left alone, sitting by the fire, with deep peace in his heart and a prayer on his lips.

II.

The little village of Martingy on the Swiss side of the Alps, and Aosta on the Italian, mark the terminations of the Pass of St. Bernard. At Martigny the ascent commences, and ends on the crest of the mountain about six miles beyond the village.

Four hours before the monks set forth on their expedition three persons were to be seen hurrying toward the mountain on the road from Martigny. The ascent was already becoming wearisome. Behind them lay the valley, with Martigny in the distance; its queer little *châlets*, their roofs weighed down with stones, might be dimly descried. Before the travellers were the eternal Alpine snows, where towered the head of lofty St. Bernard. Far to the east stood white-capped Mt. Rosa. To the north lay a

great bank of dark clouds, rapidly advancing. Ever and anon the little group paused and anxiously regarded the threatening heavens. The party consisted of a man, a woman, and little boy. The man, evidently a guide, seemed endeavoring to dissuade the woman from proceeding.

"Do you not see," said he, "that it is certain death to go on? With such a cloud as that, it will be quite dark in an hour, and if it snows we shall be lost."

"But," answered the woman, "I *must* go on. I tell you my husband is dying at Aosta; I *must* reach him to-morrow."

"Consider your child, Mère Wiss," continued the guide. "It is folly to expose him to such dangers. On a night like this we should freeze if we lost our way."

Silence ensued, and for half an hour they walked on steadily. The road was becoming rugged and steep, and the clouds closing in around the party, when the guide stopped and spoke again.

"Mère Wiss," he said, resolutely, "I cannot and *will* not go on. It is certain

death to climb Mons Jovis to-night. Be wise and return ere it is too late."

"Man," said the almost frantic woman, "will you leave a distracted wife and her delicate child to climb the Pass alone in the night-time?"

"Yes," replied the man: "I am not going to risk my life." And he turned away.

"God forgive your faithlessness!" said the poor woman, choking back a sob. "My child, we will do the best we can alone. Your father must not die without me. Heaven grant that we reach the hospice to-night!" And the white-faced mother, taking her boy by the hand, resumed the weary ascent. The snow began to fall, and the air, before mild, grew very cold. The little boy spoke only once; looking up to his mother's face, he asked:

"Mother, isn't to-morrow Christmas?"

"Yes, my child!"

"That is a holyday, and last year we went to Mass, and father was at home. Will he be home to-morrow?"

The mother said not a word; she only pressed a kiss on the little boy's lips, and silently breathed a prayer.

The night grew darker; the wind howled among the pines, while the driving snow nearly blinded the travellers. Little Pierre, terrified, clung to his mother.

"Oh, let's go back!" he wailed. "I am so cold, and I want my supper."

The mother stopped. "Here, my boy, I have some bread in my pocket. Now while you eat that can you not go on? It is only a little way to the hospice, and there the good monks will give you a warm bed and some broth."

Little Pierre ceased to cry while he munched his bread. For some time longer they struggled on. The snow grew deeper, and the walking more difficult. Finally the child could hardly draw his little legs out of the drifts. With a sigh the mother raised him in her arms. He was a heavy weight, and sometimes she staggered and almost fell. But her child nestled against her, and she endured through her mother's love.

"Surely," she thought, "the next turn will show the lights of the hospice. I can bear it a little longer."

Still the snow fell and the air grew

colder. The ground was much rougher, and it was quite dark. The wind wrapped the woman's skirts about her, so as to impede her movements. She was becoming very sleepy, and the thought of lying down to rest even in the snow afforded relief. Only for the sake of her child she nerved herself to resist the longing. Sleep, she knew, would end in a fatal torpor, and so she struggled on.

"Oh! why do I not see the lights of the hospice?" she moaned. "Father in heaven, have mercy! Holy Mother, help us!"

Suddenly both the wanderers felt a heavy blow. The boy roused himself with a cry.

"Who is there?" said the mother. "Oh, answer me! Save us, for Mary's sake!"

There was no reply. She placed the boy on his feet, and, too numbed for fear advanced feebly with hands outstretched. They touched something hard; it was a tree. A *tree* on the road! How could that be? Had she then lost her way? Turning, she found others; evidently she had wandered from the road in the dark.

"It can be only a little way off," she thought. "Pierre dear, mother is going to leave you here a moment. You will not be afraid, will you? See, I will wrap my shawl about you."

The woman drew the shawl from her own shoulders to put it around her child.

"Now if you hear me call, you must answer, 'Here I am, mother."

The little boy sleepily repeated, "Here I am, mother." Then with a deep sigh his mother seated him at the foot of a tree, and went in search of the road.

At first the child was frightened, but he restrained his tears, and gazed into the darkness with wide-open eyes. Soon however, his lids began to droop and the stupor overcame him. Once he heard a dull, roaring sound, and thought his mother called. He roused himself to answer, "Here I am, mother;" but only the wind replied, and he dropped asleep again.

Poor child, that dull sound was his mother's knell. She had found the road, feeling her way, and saw, far up the mountain, the gleam of lights from the hospice. In her joy she heeded not the

roar of an avalanche, which, sweeping down the mountain, buried her in its snowy depths.

. . . . . .

Deeper grows the little boy's sleep. The wind dies away, the snow ceases to fall, and the stars, in the deep blue above, make a faint light: but the cold is more intense. Help must soon come, or the little boy will never wake in this world.

A dog is bounding down the Pass. Now he stops, and, with uplifted head snuffs the air, then with loud barks he runs on again. He, too, had heard the woman's cry ere the pitiless snow had made her grave. Barry—for it is he—well knew the meaning of such a cry. Soon he turns to the left, and enters the woods. Now pausing, now running on again, he reaches the little boy. With a pleased bark he puts his nose into the child's face. There is no answering move. Barry understands that it is a desperate case. With his feet he rolls the child over and over till he is thoroughly awaked and crying with fear. Then Barry dashes back to the road, and barks for the monks; but they do not come. His

dog's mind is perplexed. What *can* he do with the little boy?

Suddenly he has an idea. He bounds back to little Pierre. As gently as would a nurse he seeks to assure the child of his kind intentions, till Pierre nestles against his great, warm body. Then Barry springs up and runs a few paces, waiting to be followed: but the snow is too deep for the little boy to walk, so the dog returns and lies down. The child draws near him, and places his arms around the shaggy neck. Again Barry rises and starts away this time dragging the child after him. Pierre begins to cry, and again Barry lies down.

Several times the performance is repeated, till the boy determined not to be deserted, climbs up on the dog's back. Joyfully Barry trots away, Pierre holding tightly to his neck, and pressing his feet against the warm sides, while surely and safely they near the twinkling lights of the hospice.

III.

THE fire was burning low in the refectory. Brother Francis sat by the chimney, musing, as he waited for the monks' return. His thoughts were far away in Bethlehem of Juda, where, eighteen hundred years before, a child was lying in a manger. What peace and happiness had that Babe brought! He had come in winter's cold, "a Light to lighten the darkness." "And in His name," mused Brother Francis, "this house now stands, to lighten the darkness of this mountain's winter of snow."

A child's cry and a noise of scratching sounded at the door. Brother Francis started up, and painfully made his way across the hall. Barry lay in the entry without, breathing heavily, his tongue lolling from his mouth; but his eyes were almost smiling, and his tail thumped against the stone floor. Behind him stood little Pierre, his cold hands wiping away his fast-freezing tears.

Next day the monks learned that little Pierre was an orphan. At Aosta, on the

other side of the mountain, the husband died on the same night that ended his wife's life. The good Brothers accepted Pierre as a Christmas gift, and for years Barry considered him his especial charge and exercised toward him a fatherly care.

When spring came there was a new grave in the little cemetery by the Pass; while no one ever sat in Brother Francis' seat, but the book lay open there as he left it.

Thirteen years after Brother Francis' death another Brother Francis took his place, and joined in the noble work to which he, as little Pierre owed his life.

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